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TALES OF MY LANDLORD.

Fourth and Last Series.

TALES OF MY LANDLORD,

Fourth and Last Series,

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM,

SCHOOLMASTER AND PARISH-CLERK OF GANDERCLEUCH.

As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where the wa'flower scents the dewy air,
Where the howlet mourns in her ivy bower
And tells the midnight moon her care;
The winds were laid, the air was still,
The stars they shot along the sky;
The fox was howling on the hill,
And the distant echoing glens reply.

ROBERT BURNS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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CASTLE DANGEROUS.

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CHAPTER I.

The drivers thorough the wood went,
For to raise the deer ;
Bowmen bickered upon the bent,
With their broad arrows clear.

The wylde thorough the woods went,
On every side shear ;
Grehounds through the groves glent,
For to kill thir deer.

Ballad of Chevy Chase, old Edit.

THE appointed morning came in cold and raw, after the manner of the Scottish March weather. Dogs yelped, yawned, and shivered, and the huntsmen, though hardy and cheerful in expectation of the day's sport, twitched their mawds, or lowland plaids, close to their throats,

and looked with some dismay at the mists which floated about the horizon, now threatening to sink down on the peaks and ridges of prominent mountains, and now to shift their position under the influence of some of the uncertain gales, which rose and fell alternately, as they swept along the valley.

Nevertheless the appearance of the whole formed, as is usual in almost all departments of the chase, a gay and a jovial spectacle. A brief truce seemed to have taken place between the nations, and the Scottish people appeared for the time rather as exhibiting the sports of their mountains in a friendly manner to the accomplished knights and bonny archers of Old England, than as performing a feudal service, neither easy nor dignified in itself, at the instigation of usurping neighbours. The figures of the cavaliers, now half seen, now exhibited fully, and at the height of strenuous exertion, according to the character of the dangerous and broken ground, particularly attracted the attention of the pedestrians, who, leading the dogs or beating the thickets, dislodged such objects of chase as they

found in the dingles, and kept their eyes fixed upon their companions, rendered more remarkable from being mounted, and the speed at which they urged their horses; the disregard of all accidents being as perfect as Melton Mowbray itself, or any other noted field of hunters of the present day, can exhibit.

The principles on which modern and ancient hunting were conducted, are, however, as different as possible. A fox, or even a hare is, in our own day, considered as a sufficient apology for a day's exercise to forty or fifty dogs, and nearly as many men and horses; but the ancient chase, even though not terminating, as it often did, in battle, carried with it objects more important, and an interest immeasurably more stirring. If indeed one species of exercise can be pointed out as more universally exhilarating and engrossing than others, it is certainly that of the chase. The poor overlaboured drudge, who has served out his day of life, and wearied all his energies in the service of his fellow mortals—he who has been for many years the slave of agriculture, or (still worse) of manufactures—engaged in raising

a single peck of corn from year to year, or in the monotonous labours of the desk—can hardly remain dead to the general happiness when the chase sweeps past him with hound and horn, and for a moment feels all the exultation of the proudest cavalier who partakes the amusement. Let any one who has witnessed the sight, recall to his imagination the vigour and lively interest which he has seen inspired into a village, including the oldest and feeblest of its inhabitants. In the words of Wordsworth, it is, on such occasions,

“ Up, Timothy, up with your staff and away,
Not a soul will remain in the village to-day ;
The hare has just started from Hamilton’s grounds,
And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds.”

But compare these inspiring sounds to the burst of a whole feudal population enjoying the sport, whose lives, instead of being spent in the monotonous toil of modern avocations, have been agitated by the hazards of war, and of the chase, its near resemblance, and you must necessarily suppose that the excitation is extended, like a fire which catches to dry heath.

To use the common expression, borrowed from another amusement, all is fish that comes in the net on such occasions. An ancient hunting-match (the nature of the carnage excepted) was almost equal to a modern battle, when the strife took place on the surface of a varied and unequal country. A whole district poured forth its inhabitants, who formed a ring of great extent, called technically a tinchel, and, advancing and narrowing their circle by degrees, drove before them the alarmed animals of every kind ; all and each of which, as they burst from the thicket or the moorland, were objects of the bow, the javelin, or whatever missile weapons the hunters possessed ; while others were run down and worried by large greyhounds, or more frequently brought to bay, when the more important persons present claimed for themselves the pleasure of putting them to death with their chivalrous hands, incurring individually such danger as is inferred from a mortal contest even with the timid buck, when he is brought to the death-struggle, and has no choice but yielding his life, or putting

himself upon the defensive, by the aid of his splendid antlers, and with all the courage of despair.

The quantity of game found in Douglas Dale on this occasion was very considerable, for, as already noticed, it was a long time since a hunting upon a great scale had been attempted under the Douglasses themselves, whose misfortunes had commenced, several years before, with those of their country. The English garrison, too, had not sooner judged themselves strong or numerous enough to exercise these valued feudal privileges. In the meantime the game increased considerably. The deer, the wild cattle, and the wild boars, lay near the foot of the mountains, and made frequent irruptions into the lower part of the valley, which in Douglas Dale bears no small resemblance to an oasis, surrounded by tangled woods and broken moors, occasionally rocky, and showing large tracts of that bleak dominion to which wild creatures gladly escape when pressed by the neighbourhood of man.

As the hunters traversed the spots which separated the field from the wood, there was always a stimulating uncertainty what sort of game was to be found, and the marksman, with his bow ready bent, or his javelin poised, and his good and well-bitted horse thrown upon its haunches, ready for a sudden start, observed watchfully what should rush from the covert, so that, were it deer, boar, wolf, wild cattle, or any other species of game, he might be in readiness.

The wolf, which, on account of its ravages, was the most obnoxious of the beasts of prey, did not, however, supply the degree of diversion which his name promised; he usually fled far—in some instances many miles—before he took courage to turn to bay, and though formidable at such moments, destroying both dogs and men by his terrible bite, yet at other times was rather despised for his cowardice. The boar, on the other hand, was a much more irascible and courageous animal.

The wild cattle, the most formidable of all the tenants of the ancient Caledonian forest, were, however, to the English cavaliers, by far

the most interesting objects of pursuit.* Altogether, the ringing of bugles, the clattering of horses' hoofs, the lowing and bellowing of the

* These Bulls are thus described by Hector Boetius, concerning whom he says—"In this wood (namely the Caledonian wood,) were sometime white bulls, with crisp and curling manes, like fierce lions; and though they seemed meek and tame in the remanent figure of their bodies, they were more wild than any other beasts, and had such hatred against the society and company of men, that they never came in the woods nor lesuries where they found any foot or hand thereof, and many days after they eat not of the herbs that were touched or handled by man. These bulls were so wild, that they were never taken but by slight and crafty labour, and so impatient, that after they were taken they died from insupportable dolour. As soon as any man invaded these bulls, they rushed with such terrible press upon him that they struck him to the earth, taking no fear of hounds, sharp lances, or other most penetrative weapons."—*Boetius, Chron. Scot.* Vol. I. page xxxix.

The wild cattle of this breed, which are now only known in one manor in England, that of Chillingham Castle, in Northumberland, were, in the memory of man, still preserved in three places in Scotland, namely, Drumlanrig, Cumbernauld, and the park at Hamilton Palace, at all of which places, except the last, I believe they have now been destroyed, on account of their ferocity. But though those of modern days were remarkable for their white colour, with black muzzles, and exhibiting, in a small degree, the black mane, about three or four inches long, with which the bulls in particular were distinguished, they do not by any means come near the terrific description given us by the ancient authors, which has made some naturalists think that these animals probably refer

enraged mountain cattle, the sobs of deer mangled by throttling dogs, the wild shouts of exultation of the men,—made a chorus which extended far through the scene in which it arose, and seemed to threaten the inhabitants of the valley even in its inmost recesses.

During the course of the hunting, when a stag or a boar was expected, one of the wild cattle often came rushing forward, bearing down the young trees, crashing the branches in its progress, and in general dispersing whatever opposition was presented to it by the hunters. Sir John de Walton was the only one of the chivalry of the party who individually succeeded in mastering one of these powerful animals. Like

to a different species, though possessing the same general habits, and included in the same genus. The bones which are often discovered in Scottish mosses belong certainly to a race of animals much larger than those of Chillingham, which seldom grow to above 80 stone (of 14 lbs.), the general weight varying from 60 to 80 stone. We should be accounted very negligent by one class of readers, did we not record that the beef furnished by those cattle is of excellent flavour, and finely marbled.

a Spanish tauridor, he bore down and killed with his lance a ferocious bull; two well grown calves and three kine were also slain, being unable to carry off the quantity of arrows, javelins, and other missiles, directed against them by the archers and drivers; but many others, in spite of every endeavour to intercept them, escaped to their gloomy haunts in the remote skirts of the mountain called Cairntable, with their hides well feathered with those marks of human enmity.

A large portion of the morning was spent in this way, until a particular blast from the master of the hunt announced that he had not forgot the discreet custom of the repast, which, on such occasions, was provided for upon a scale proportioned to the multitude who had been convened to attend the sport.

The blast peculiar to the time, assembled the whole party in an open space in a wood, where their numbers had room and accommodation to sit down upon the green turf, the slain game affording a plentiful supply for roasting or broil-

ing, an employment in which the lower class were all immediately engaged ; while puncheons and pipes, placed in readiness, and scientifically opened, supplied Gascoigne wine, and mighty ale, at the pleasure of those who chose to appeal to them.

The knights, whose rank did not admit of interference, were seated by themselves, and ministered to by their squires and pages, to whom such menial services were not accounted disgraceful, but, on the contrary, a proper step of their education. The number of those distinguished persons seated upon the present occasion at the table of dais, as it was called, (in virtue of a canopy of green boughs with which it was overshadowed,) comprehended Sir John de Walton, Sir Aymer de Valence, and some reverend brethren dedicated to the service of Saint Bride, who, though Scottish ecclesiastics, were treated with becoming respect by the English soldiers. One or two Scottish retainers or vavassours, maintaining, perhaps in prudence, a suitable deference to the English knights, sat at the

bottom of the table, and as many English archers, peculiarly respected by their superiors, were invited, according to the modern phrase, to the honours of the sitting.

Sir John de Walton sat at the head of the table; his eye, though it seemed to have no certain object, yet never for a moment remained stationary, but glanced from one countenance to another of the ring formed by his guests, for such they all were, no doubt, though he himself could hardly have told upon what principle he had issued the invitations; and even apparently was at a loss to think what, in one or two cases, had procured him the honour of their presence.

One person in particular caught De Walton's eye, as having the air of a redoubted man-at-arms, although it seemed as if fortune had not of late smiled upon his enterprises. He was a tall raw-boned man, of an extremely rugged countenance, and his skin, which shewed itself through many a loophole in his dress, exhibited a complexion which must have endured all the varie-

ties of an outlawed life; and akin to one who had, according to the customary phrase, "ta'en the bent with Robin Bruce," in other words, occupied the moors with him as an insurgent. Some such idea certainly crossed De Walton's mind. Yet the apparent coolness, and absence of alarm, with which the stranger sat at the board of an English officer, at the same time being wholly in his power, had much in it which was irreconcilable with any such suggestion. De Walton, and several of those about him, had in the course of the day observed that this tattered cavalier, the most remarkable parts of whose garb and equipments consisted of an old coat-of-mail and a rusted yet massive partisan about eight feet long, was possessed of superior skill in the art of hunting to any individual of their numerous party. The governor having looked at this suspicious figure until he had rendered the stranger aware of the special interest which he attracted, at length filled a goblet of choice wine, and requested him, as one of the best pupils of Sir Tristrem who had attended upon the day's chase, to pledge him

in a vintage superior to that supplied to the general company.

“ I suppose, however, sir,” said De Walton, “ you will have no objections to put off my challenge of a brimmer, until you can answer my pledge in Gascoigne wine, which grew in the king’s own demesne, was pressed for his own lip, and is therefore fittest to be emptied to his majesty’s health and prosperity.”

“ One half of the island of Britain,” said the woodsman, with great composure, “ will be of your honour’s opinion ; but as I belong to the other half, even the choicest liquor in Gascony cannot render that health acceptable to me.”

A murmur of disapprobation ran through the warriors present ; the priests hung their heads, looked deadly grave, and muttered their paternosters.

“ You see, stranger,” said De Walton sternly, “ that your speech discomposes the company.”

“ It may be so,” replied the man, in the same blunt tone ; “ and it may happen that there is no harm in the speech notwithstanding.”

“Do you consider that it is made in my presence?” answered De Walton.

“Yes, Sir Governor.”

“And have you thought what must be the necessary inference?” continued De Walton.

“I may form a round guess,” answered the stranger, “what I might have to fear, if your safe conduct and word of honour, when inviting me to this hunting, were less trustworthy than I know full well it really is. But I am your guest—your meat is even now passing my throat—your cup, filled with right good wine, I have just now quaffed off—and I would not fear the rankest Paynim infidel, if we stood in such relation together, much less an English knight. I tell you, besides, Sir Knight, you undervalue the wine we have quaffed. The high flavour and contents of your cup, grow where it will, give me spirit to tell you one or two circumstances, which cold cautious sobriety would, in a moment like this, have left unsaid. You wish, I doubt not, to know who I am? My christian name is Michael—my surname is that of Turn-

bull, a redoubted clan, to whose honours, even in the field of hunting or of battle, I have added something. My abode is beneath the mountain of Rubieslaw, by the fair streams of Teviot. You are surprised that I know how to hunt the wild cattle,—I, who have made them my sport from infancy in the lonely forests of Jed and Southdean, and have killed more of them than you or any Englishman in your host ever saw, even if you include the doughty deeds of this day.”

The bold borderer made this declaration with the same provoking degree of coolness which predominated in his whole demeanour, and was indeed his principal attribute. His effrontery did not fail to produce its effect upon Sir John de Walton, who instantly called out, “To arms! to arms!—Secure the spy and traitor! Ho! pages and yeomen—William, Anthony, Bend-the-bow, and Greenleaf—seize the traitor, and bind him with your bowstrings and dog-leashes—bind him, I say, until the blood start from beneath his nails!”

“Here is a goodly summons!” said Turnbull, with a sort of horse-laugh. “Were I as sure of being answered by twenty men I could name, there would be small doubt of the upshot of this day.”

The archers thickened around the hunter, yet laid no hold on him, none of them being willing to be the first who broke the peace proper to the occasion.

“Tell me,” said De Walton, “thou traitor, for what waitest thou here?”

“Simply and solely,” said the Jed forester, “that I may deliver up to the Douglas the castle of his ancestors, and that I may insure thee, Sir Englishman, the payment of thy deserts, by cutting that very throat which thou makest such a bawling use of.”

At the same time, perceiving that the yeomen were crowding behind him to carry their lord’s commands into execution so soon as they should be reiterated, the huntsman turned himself short round upon those who appeared about to surprise him, and having, by the suddenness of the action,

induced them to step back a pace, he proceeded —“ Yes, John de Walton, my purpose was ere now to have put thee to death, as one whom I find in possession of that castle and territory which belong to my master, a knight much more worthy than thyself; but I know not why I have paused—thou hast given me food when I have hungered for twenty-four hours, I have not therefore had the heart to pay thee at advantage as thou hast deserved. Begone from this place and country, and take the fair warning of a foe; thou hast constituted thyself the mortal enemy of this people, and there are those among them who have seldom been injured or defied with impunity. Take no care in searching after me,—it will be in vain,—until I meet thee at a time which will come at my pleasure, not thine. Push not your inquisition into cruelty, to discover by what means I have deceived you, for it is impossible for you to learn; and with this friendly advice, look at me and take your leave, for although we shall one day meet, it may be long ere I see you again.”

De Walton remained silent, hoping that his prisoner, (for he saw no chance of his escaping,) might, in his communicative humour, drop some more information, and was not desirous to precipitate a fray with which the scene was likely to conclude, unconscious at the same time of the advantage which he thereby gave the daring hunter.

As Turnbull concluded his sentence, he made a sudden spring backwards, which carried him out of the circle formed around him, and before they were aware of his intentions, at once disappeared among the underwood.

“Seize him—seize him!” repeated De Walton; “let us have him at least at our discretion, unless the earth has actually swallowed him.”

This indeed appeared not unlikely, for near the place where Turnbull had made the spring, there yawned a steep ravine, into which he plunged, and descended by the assistance of branches, bushes, and copsewood, until he reached the bottom, where he found some road to the outskirts of the forest, through which he

made his escape, leaving the most expert woodsmen among the pursuers totally at fault, and unable to trace his footsteps.

CHAPTER II.

THIS interlude carried some confusion into the proceedings of the hunt, thus suddenly surprised by the apparition of Michael Turnbull, an armed and avowed follower of the House of Douglas, a sight so little to be expected in the territory where his master was held a rebel and a bandit, and where he himself must have been well known to most of the peasantry present. The circumstance made an obvious impression on the English chivalry. Sir John de Walton looked grave and thoughtful, ordered the hunters to be assembled on the spot, and directed his soldiers to commence a strict search among the persons who had attended the chase, so as to discover

whether Turnbull had any companions among them; but it was too late to make that enquiry in the strict fashion which De Walton directed.

The Scottish attendants on the chase, when they beheld that the hunting, under pretence of which they were called together, was interrupted for the purpose of laying hands upon their persons, and subjecting them to examination, took care to suit their answers to the questions put to them; in a word, they kept their own secret, if they had any. Many of them, conscious of being the weaker party, became afraid of foul play, slipt away from the places to which they had been appointed, and left the hunting-match like men who conceived they had been invited with no friendly intent. Sir John de Walton became aware of the decreasing numbers of the Scottish—their gradual disappearance awakening in the English knight that degree of suspicion which had of late become his peculiar characteristic.

“Take, I pray thee,” said he to Sir Aymer de Valence, “as many men-at-arms as thou canst

get together in five minutes space, and at least a hundred of the mounted archers, and ride as fast as thou canst, without permitting them to straggle from thy standard, to reinforce the garrison of Douglas ; for I have my own thoughts what may have been attempted on the castle, when we observe with our own eyes such a nest of traitors here assembled."

"With reverence, Sir John," replied Aymer, "you shoot in this matter rather beyond the mark. That the Scottish peasants have bad thoughts against us, I will be the last to deny ; but long debarred from any silvan sport, you cannot wonder at their crowding to any diversion by wood or river, and still less at their being easily alarmed as to the certainty of the safe footing on which they stand with us. The least rough usage is likely to strike them with fear, and with the desire of escape, and so"—

"And so," said Sir John de Walton, who had listened with a degree of impatience scarce consistent with the grave and formal politeness which one knight was accustomed to bestow upon another, "and so I would rather see Sir Aymer

de Valence busy his horse's heels to execute my orders, than give his tongue the trouble of impugning them."

At this sharp reprimand, all present looked at each other with indications of marked displeasure. Sir Aymer was highly offended, but saw it was no time to indulge in reprisal. He bowed until the feather which was in his barret-cap mingled with his horse's mane, and without reply—for he did not even choose to trust his voice in reply at the moment—headed a considerable body of cavalry by the straightest road back to the Castle of Douglas.

When he came to one of those eminences from which he could observe the massive and complicated towers and walls of the old fortress, with the glitter of the broad lake, which surrounded it on three sides, he felt much pleasure at the sight of the great banner of England, which streamed from the highest part of the building. "I knew it," he internally said; "I was certain that Sir John de Walton had become a very woman in the indulgence of his fears and suspicions. Alas! that a situation of responsibility should so

much have altered a disposition which I have known so noble and so knightly ! By this good day, I scarce knew in what manner I should demean me when thus publicly rebuked before the garrison. Certainly he deserves that I should, at some time or other, let him understand, that, however he may triumph in the exercise of his short-lived command, yet when man is to meet with man, it will puzzle Sir John de Walton to show himself the superior of Aymer de Valence, or perhaps to establish himself as his equal. But if, on the contrary, his fears, however fantastic, are sincere at the moment he expresses them, it becomes me to obey punctually commands, which, however absurd, are imposed in consequence of the governor's belief that they are rendered necessary by the times, and not inventions designed to vex and domineer over his officers in the indulgence of his official powers. I would I knew which is the true statement of the case, and whether the once famed De Walton is become afraid of his enemies more than fits a knight, or makes imaginary doubts the pretext of tyrannizing over his friend. I cannot

say it would make much difference to me, but I would rather have it that the man I once loved had turned a petty tyrant than a weak-spirited coward ; and I would be content that he should study to vex me, rather than be afraid of his own shadow."

With these ideas passing in his mind, the young knight crossed the causeway which traversed the piece of water that fed the moat, and, passing under the strongly fortified gateway, gave strict orders for letting down the portcullis, and elevating the drawbridge, even at the appearance of De Walton's own standard before it.

A slow and guarded movement from the hunting-ground to the Castle of Douglas, gave the governor ample time to recover his temper, and to forget that his young friend had shown less alacrity than usual in obeying his commands. He was even disposed to treat as a jest the length of time and extreme degree of ceremony with which every point of martial discipline was observed on his own re-admission to the castle, though the raw air of a wet spring evening whistled around his own unsheltered person, and

those of his followers, as they waited before the castle-gate for the exchange of passwords, the delivery of keys, and all the slow minutiae attendant upon the movements of a garrison in a well-guarded fortress.

“Come,” said he to an old knight, who was peevishly blaming the lieutenant-governor, “it was my own fault; I spoke but now to Aymer de Valence with more authoritative emphasis than his newly dubbed dignity was pleased with, and this precise style of obedience is a piece of not unnatural and very pardonable revenge. Well, we will owe him a return, Sir Philip—Shall we not? This is not a night to keep a man at the gate.”

This dialogue, overheard by some of the squires and pages, was bandied about from one to another, until it entirely lost the tone of good humour in which it was spoken, and the offence was one for which Sir John de Walton and old Sir Philip were to meditate revenge, and was said to have been represented by the governor as a piece of mortal and intentional offence on the part of his subordinate officer.

Thus an increasing feud went on from day to day between two warriors, who, with no just cause of quarrel, had at heart every reason to esteem and love each other. It became visible in the fortress even to those of the lower rank, who hoped to gain some consequence, by intermingling in the species of emulation produced by the jealousy of the commanding officers—an emulation which may take place, indeed, in the present day, but can hardly have the same sense of wounded pride and jealous dignity attached to it, which existed in times when the personal honour of knighthood rendered those who possessed it jealous of every punctilio.

So many little debates took place between the two knights, that Sir Aymer de Valence thought himself under the necessity of writing to his uncle and namesake, the Earl of Pembroke, stating that his officer, Sir John de Walton, had unfortunately of late taken some degree of prejudice against him, and that, after having borne with many provoking instances of his displeasure, he was now compelled to request that his place of service should be changed from the

Castle of Douglas, to wherever honour could be acquired, and time might be given to put an end to his present cause of complaint against his commanding officer. Through the whole letter, young Sir Aymer was particularly cautious how he expressed his sense of Sir John de Walton's jealousy or severe usage; but such sentiments are not easily concealed, and in spite of him an air of displeasure glanced out from several passages, and indicated his discontent with his uncle's old friend and companion in arms, and with the sphere of military duty which his uncle had himself assigned him.

An accidental movement among the English troops brought Sir Aymer an answer to his letter sooner than he could have hoped for at that time of day, in the ordinary course of correspondence, which was then extremely slow and interrupted.

Pembroke, a rigid old warrior, entertained the most partial opinion of Sir John de Walton, who was a work as it were of his own hands, and was indignant to find that his nephew, whom he considered as a mere boy, elated by having

had the dignity of knighthood conferred upon him at an age unusually early, did not absolutely coincide with him in this opinion. He replied to him, accordingly, in a tone of high displeasure, and expressed himself as a person of rank would write to a young and dependent kinsman upon the duties of his profession; and, as he gathered his nephew's cause of complaint from his own letter, he conceived that he did him no injustice in making it slighter than it really was. He reminded the young man that the study of chivalry consisted in the faithful and patient discharge of military service, whether of high or low degree, according to the circumstances in which war placed the champion. That above all, the post of danger, which Douglas Castle had been termed by common consent, was also the post of honour; and that a young man should be cautious how he incurred the supposition of being desirous of quitting his present honourable command, because he was tired of the discipline of a military director so renowned as Sir John de Walton. Much also there was, as was natural in a letter of that time, concerning the duty of

young men, whether in council or in arms, to be guided implicitly by their elders ; and it was observed, with justice, that the commanding officer, who had put himself into the situation of being responsible with his honour, if not his life, for the event of the siege or blockade, might justly, and in a degree more than common, claim the implicit direction of the whole defence. Lastly, Pembroke reminded his nephew that he was, in a great measure, dependent upon the report of Sir John de Walton for the character which he was to sustain in after life ; and reminded him, that a few actions of headlong and inconsiderate valour would not so firmly found his military reputation, as months and years spent in regular, humble, and steady obedience to the commands which the governor of Douglas Castle might think necessary in so dangerous a conjuncture.

This missive arrived within so short time after the despatch of the letter to which it was a reply, that Sir Aymer was almost tempted to suppose that his uncle had some mode of corresponding with De Walton, unknown to the young knight

himself, and to the rest of the garrison. And as the earl alluded to some particular displeasure which had been exhibited by De Valence on a late trivial occasion, his uncle's knowledge of this, and other minutiae, seemed to confirm his idea that his own conduct was watched in a manner which he did not feel honourable to himself, or dignified on the part of his relative; in a word, he conceived himself exposed to that sort of surveillance of which, in all ages, the young have accused the old. It hardly needs to say, that the admonition of the Earl of Pembroke greatly chafed the fiery spirit of his nephew; insomuch, that if the earl had wished to write a letter purposely to increase the prejudices which he desired to put an end to, he could not have made use of terms better calculated for that effect.

The truth was, that the old archer, Gilbert Greenleaf, had, without the knowledge of the young knight, gone to Pembroke's camp, in Ayrshire, and was recommended by Sir John de Walton to the earl, as a person who could give such minute information respecting Aymer de

Valence, as he might desire to receive. The old archer was, as we have seen, a formalist, and when pressed on some points of Sir Aymer de Valence's discipline, he did not hesitate to throw out hints, which, connected with those in the knight's letter to his uncle, made the severe old earl adopt too implicitly the idea that his nephew was indulging a spirit of insubordination, and a sense of impatience under authority, most dangerous to the character of a young soldier. A little explanation might have produced a complete agreement in the sentiments of both ; but for this, fate allowed neither time nor opportunity ; and the old earl was unfortunately induced to become a party, instead of a negotiator, in the quarrel,

“ And by decision more embroil'd the fray.”

Sir John de Walton soon perceived, that the receipt of Pembroke's letter did not in any respect alter the cold ceremonious conduct of his lieutenant towards him, which limited their intercourse to what their situation rendered indispensable, and exhibited no advances to any more

frank or intimate connexion. Thus, as may sometimes be the case between officers in their relative situations even at the present day, they remained in that cold stiff degree of official communication, in which their intercourse was limited to as few expressions as the respective duties of their situation absolutely demanded. Such a state of misunderstanding is, in fact, worse than a downright quarrel;—the latter may be explained or apologized for, or become the subject of mediation; but in such a case as the former, an *eclaircissement* is as unlikely to take place as a general engagement between two armies which have taken up strong defensive positions on both sides. Duty, however, obliged the two principal persons in the garrison of Douglas Castle, to be often together, when they were so far from seeking an opportunity of making up matters, that they usually revived ancient subjects of debate.

It was upon such an occasion that De Walton, in a very formal manner, asked De Valence in what capacity, and for how long time, it was his pleasure that the minstrel, called Bertram, should remain at the castle.

“ A week,” said the governor, “ is certainly long enough, in this time and place, to express the hospitality due to a minstrel.”

“ Certainly,” replied the young man, “ I have not interest enough in the subject to form a single wish upon it.”

“ In that case,” resumed De Walton, “ I shall request of this person to cut short his visit at the Castle of Douglas.”

“ I know no particular interest,” replied Aymer de Valence, “ which I can possibly have in this man’s motions. He is here under pretence of making some researches after the writings of Thomas of Erceldoun, called the Rhymer, which he says are infinitely curious, and of which there is a volume in the old Baron’s study, saved somehow from the flames at the last conflagration. This told, you know as much of his errand as I do ; and if you hold the presence of a wandering old man, and the neighbourhood of a boy, dangerous to the castle under your charge, you will no doubt do well to dismiss them,—it will cost but a word of your mouth.”

“ Pardon me,” said De Walton; “ the minstrel

came here as one of your retinue, and I could not, in fitting courtesy, send him away without your leave."

"I am sorry, then," answered Sir Aymer, "in my turn, that you did not mention your purpose sooner. I never entertained a dependent vassal or servant, whose residence in the castle I would wish to have prolonged a moment beyond your honourable pleasure."

"I am sorry," said Sir John de Walton, "that we two have of late grown so extremely courteous that it is difficult for us to understand each other. This minstrel and his son come from we know not where, and are bound we know not whither. There is a report among some of your escort, that this fellow Bertram upon the way had the audacity to impugn, even to your face, the King of England's right to the crown of Scotland, and that he debated the point with you, while your other attendants were desired by you to keep behind and out of hearing."

"Hah!" said Sir Aymer, "do you mean to found on that circumstance any charge against my loyalty? I pray you to observe, that such

an averment would touch mine honour, which I am ready and willing to defend to the last gasp."

"No doubt of it, Sir Knight," answered the governor; "but it is the strolling minstrel, and not the high-born English knight, against whom the charge is brought. Well! the minstrel comes to this castle, and he intimates a wish that his son should be allowed to take up his quarters at the little old convent of Saint Bride, where two or three Scottish nuns and friars are still permitted to reside, most of them rather out of respect to their order, than for any goodwill which they are supposed to bear the English or their sovereign. It may also be noticed, that this leave was purchased by a larger sum of money, if my information be correct, than is usually to be found in the purses of travelling minstrels, a class of wanderers alike remarkable for their poverty and for their genius. What do you think of all this?"

"I?"—replied De Valence; "I am happy that my situation, as a soldier under command, altogether dispenses with my thinking of it at

all. My post, as lieutenant of your castle, is such, that if I can manage matters so as to call my honour and my soul my own, I must think that quite enough of free-will is left at my command; and I promise you shall not have again to reprove, or send a bad report of me to my uncle, on that account."

"This is beyond sufferance!" said Sir John de Walton half aside, and then proceeded aloud—"Do not, for Heaven's sake, do yourself and me the injustice of supposing that I am endeavouring to gain an advantage over you by these questions. Recollect, young knight, that when you evade giving your commanding officer your advice when required, you fail as much in point of duty, as if you declined affording him the assistance of your sword and lance."

"Such being the case," answered De Valence, "let me know plainly on what matter it is that you require my opinion? I will deliver it plainly, and stand by the result, even if I should have the misfortune (a crime unpardonable in so young a man, and so inferior an officer) to differ from that of Sir John de Walton."

“ I would ask you then, Sir Knight of Valence,” answered the governor, “ what is your opinion with respect to this minstrel, Bertram, and whether the suspicions respecting him and his son are not such as to call upon me, in performance of my duty, to put them to a close examination, with the question ordinary and extraordinary, as is usual in such cases, and to expel them not only from the castle, but from the whole territory of Douglas Dale, under pain of scourging, if they be again found wandering in these parts.”

“ You ask me my opinion,” said De Valence, “ and you shall have it, Sir Knight of Walton, as freely and fairly, as if matters stood betwixt us on a footing as friendly as they ever did. I agree with you, that most of those who in these days profess the science of minstrelsy, are altogether unqualified to support the higher pretensions of that noble order. Minstrels by right, are men who have dedicated themselves to the noble occupation of celebrating knightly deeds and generous principles ; it is in their verse that the valiant knight is handed down to fame, and the poet has

a right, nay is bound, to emulate the virtues which he praises. The looseness of the times has diminished the consequence, and impaired the morality of this class of wanderers; their satire and their praise are now too often distributed on no other principle than love of gain; yet let us hope that there are still among them some who know, and also willingly perform, their duty. My own opinion is, that this Bertram holds himself as one who has not shared in the degradation of his brethren, nor bent the knee to the mammon of the times; it must remain with you, sir, to judge whether such a person, honourably and morally disposed, can cause any danger to the Castle of Douglas. But believing, from the sentiments he has manifested to me, that he is incapable of playing the part of a traitor, I must strongly remonstrate against his being punished as one, or subjected to the torture within the walls of an English garrison. I should blush for my country, if it required of us to inflict such wanton misery upon wanderers, whose sole fault is poverty; and your own knightly sentiments will suggest more than would become me to state to Sir John de Walton,

unless in so far as is necessary to apologize for retaining my own opinion."

Sir John de Walton's dark brow was stricken with red when he heard an opinion delivered in opposition to his own, which plainly went to stigmatize his advice as ungenerous, unfeeling, and unknightly. He made an effort to preserve his temper, while he thus replied with a degree of calmness. "You have given your opinion, Sir Aymer de Valence; and that you have given it openly and boldly, without regard to my own, I thank you. It is not quite so clear that I am obliged to defer my own sentiments to yours, in case the rules on which I hold my office—the commands of the king—and the observations which I may personally have made, shall recommend to me a different line of conduct from that which you think it right to adopt."

De Walton bowed, in conclusion, with great gravity; and the young knight, returning the reverence with exactly the same degree of stiff formality, asked whether there were any particular orders respecting his duty in the castle;

and having received an answer in the negative, took his departure.

Sir John de Walton, after an expression of impatience, as if disappointed at finding that the advance which he had made towards an explanation with his young friend had proved unexpectedly abortive, composed his brow as if to deep thought, and walked several times to and fro in the apartment, considering what course he was to take in these circumstances. "It is hard to censure him severely," he said, "when I recollect that, on first entering upon life, my own thoughts and feelings would have been the same with those of this giddy and hotheaded, but generous boy. Now prudence teaches me to suspect mankind in a thousand instances, where perhaps there is not sufficient ground. If I am disposed to venture my own honour and fortune, rather than an idle travelling minstrel should suffer a little pain, which at all events I might make up to him by money, still, have I a right to run the risk of a conspiracy against the king, and thus advance the treasonable surrender of the Castle of Douglas, for which I know so

many schemes are formed; for which, too, none can be imagined so desperate but agents will be found bold enough to undertake the execution? A man who holds my situation, although the slave of conscience, ought to learn to set aside those false scruples which assume the appearance of flowing from our own moral feeling, whereas they are in fact instilled by the suggestion of affected delicacy. I will not, I swear by Heaven, be infected by the follies of a boy such as Aymer; I will not, that I may defer to his caprices, lose all that love, honour, and ambition can propose, for the reward of twelve months' service, of a nature the most watchful and unpleasant. I will go straight to my point, and use the ordinary precautions in Scotland, which I should employ in Normandy or Gascoigny.—What ho! page? who waits there?"

One of his attendants replied to his summons —“ Seek me out Gilbert Greenleaf the archer, and tell him I would speak with him touching the two bows and the sheaf of arrows, concerning which I gave him a commission to Ayr.”

A few minutes intervened after the order was

given, when the archer entered, holding in his hand two bow-staves, not yet fashioned, and a number of arrows secured together with a thong. He bore the mysterious looks of one whose apparent business is not of very great consequence, but is meant as a passport for other affairs which are in themselves of a secret nature. Accordingly, as the knight was silent, and afforded no other opening for Greenleaf, that judicious negotiator proceeded to enter upon such as was open to him.

“Here are the bow-staves, noble sir, which you desired me to obtain while I was at Ayr with the Earl of Pembroke’s army. They are not so good as I could have wished, yet are perhaps of better quality than could have been procured by any other than a fair judge of the weapon. The Earl of Pembroke’s whole camp are frantic mad in order to procure real Spanish staves from the Groyne, and other ports in Spain; but though two vessels laden with such came into the port of Ayr, said to be for the King’s army, yet I believe never one half of them have come into English hands. These two grew in Sherwood,

which having been seasoned since the time of Robin Hood, are not likely to fail either in strength or in aim, in so strong a hand, and with so just an eye, as those of the men who wait on your worship."

"And who has got the rest, since two ships' cargoes of new bow-staves [are arrived at Ayr, and thou with difficulty hast only procured me two old ones?" said the governor.

"Faith, I pretend not skill enough to know," answered Greenleaf, shrugging his shoulders.

"Talk there is of plots in that country as well as here. It is said that their Bruce, and the rest of his kinsmen, intend a new May-game, and that the outlawed king proposes to land near to Turnberry, early in summer, with a number of stout kernes from Ireland; and no doubt the men of his mock earldom of Carrick are getting them ready with bow and spear for so hopeful an undertaking. I reckon that it will not cost us the expense of more than a few score of sheaves of arrows to put all that matter to rights."

"Do you talk then of conspiracies in this part

of the country, Greenleaf?" said De Walton. "I know you are a sagacious fellow, well bred for many a day to the use of the bent stick and string, and will not allow such a practice to go on under thy nose, without taking notice of it."

"I am old enough, Heaven knows," said Greenleaf, "and have had good experience of these Scottish wars, and know well whether these native Scots are a people to be trusted to by knight or yeoman. Say they are a false generation, and say a good archer told you so, who, with a fair aim, seldom missed a handbreadth of the white. Ah! sir, your honour knows how to deal with them,—ride them strongly, and rein them hard,—you are not like those simple novices who imagine that all is to be done by gentleness, and wish to parade themselves as courteous and generous to those faithless mountaineers, who never, in the course of their lives, knew any tincture either of courteousness or generosity."

"Thou alludest to some one," said the governor, "and I charge thee, Gilbert, to be plain and sincere with me. Thou knowest, methinks, that in trusting me thou will come to no harm?"

“It is true, it is true, sir,” said the old remnant of the wars, carrying his hand to his brow; “but it were imprudent to communicate all the remarks which float through an old man’s brain in the idle moments of such a garrison as this. One stumbles unawares on fantasies, as well as realities, and thus one gets, not altogether undeservedly, the character of a tale-bearer and mischief-maker among his comrades, and methinks I would not willingly fall under that accusation.”

“Speak frankly to me,” answered De Walton, “and have no fear of being misconstrued, whosoever the conversation may concern.”

“Nay, in plain truth,” answered Gilbert, “I fear not the greatness of this young knight, being, as I am, the oldest soldier in the garrison, and having drawn a bow-string long and many a day ere he was weaned from his nurse’s breast.”

“It is then,” said De Walton, “my lieutenant and friend, Aymer de Valence, at whom your suspicions point?”

“At nothing,” replied the archer, “touching the honour of the young knight himself, who is as brave as the sword he wears, and, his youth considered, stands high in the roll of English chivalry; but he is young, as your worship knows, and I own that in the choice of his company he disturbs and alarms me.”

“Why, you know, Greenleaf,” answered the governor, “that in the leisure of a garrison a knight cannot always confine his sports and pleasures among those of his own rank, who are not numerous, and may not be so gamesome or fond of frolic as he would desire them to be.”

“I know that well,” answered the archer; “nor would I say a word concerning your honour’s lieutenant, for joining any honest fellows, however inferior their rank, in the wrestling ring, or at a bout of quarterstaff. But if Sir Aymer de Valence has a fondness for martial tales of former days, methinks he had better learn them from the ancient soldiers who have followed Edward the First, whom God assoilzie, and who have known before his time the Barons’ wars and other onslaughts, in which the knights and

archers of merry England transmitted so many gallant actions to be récorded by fame; this truly, I say, were more beseeming the Earl of Pembroke's nephew, than to see him closet himself day after day with a strolling minstrel, who gains his livelihood by reciting nonsense and lies to such young men as are fond enough to believe him, of whom hardly any one knows whether he be English or Scottish in his opinions, and still less can any one pretend to say whether he is of English or Scottish birth, or with what purpose he lies lounging about this castle, and is left free to communicate every thing which passes within it to these old mutterers of matins at Saint Bride's, who say with their tongues, God save King Edward, but pray in their hearts, God save King Robert the Bruce. Such a communication he can easily carry on by means of his son, who lies at Saint Bride's cell, as your worship knows, under pretence of illness."

"How do you say?" exclaimed the governor, "under pretence?—is he not then really indisposed?"

"Nay, he may be sick to the death for aught

I know," said the archer; "but if so, were it not then more natural that the father should attend his son's sick-bed, than that he should be ranging about this castle, where one eternally meets him in the old Baron's study, or in some corner, where you least expect to find him."

"If he has no lawful object," replied the knight, "it might be as you say; but he is said to be in quest of ancient poems or prophecies of Merlin, of the Rhymer, or some other old bard; and in truth it is natural for him to wish to enlarge his stock of knowledge and power of giving amusement, and where should he find the means save in a study filled with ancient books?"

"No doubt," replied the archer, with a sort of dry civil sneer of incredulity; "I have seldom known an insurrection in Scotland but that it was prophesied by some old forgotten rhyme, conjured out of dust and cobwebs, for the sake of giving courage to those North Country rebels who durst not otherwise have abidden the whistling of the grey-goose shaft; but curled heads are hasty, and, with license, even your own

train, Sir Knight, retains too much of the fire of youth for such uncertain times as the present."

"Thou hast convinced me, Gilbert Greenleaf, and I will look into this man's business and occupation more closely than hitherto. This is no time to peril the safety of a royal castle for the sake of affecting generosity towards a man of whom we know so little, and to whom, till we receive a very full explanation, we may, without doing him injustice, attach grave suspicions. Is he now in the apartment called the Baron's study?"

"Your worship will be certain to find him there," replied Greenleaf.

"Then follow me, with two or three of thy comrades, and keep out of sight, but within hearing; it may be necessary to arrest this man."

"My assistance," said the old archer, "shall be at hand when you call, but"—

"But what?" said the knight; "I hope I am not to find doubts and disobedience on all hands?"

"Certainly not on mine," replied Greenleaf; "I would only remind your worship that what

I have said was a sincere opinion expressed in answer to your worship's question; and that, as Sir Aymer de Valence has avowed himself the patron of this man, I would not willingly be left to the hazard of his revenge."

"Pshaw!" answered De Walton, "is Aymer de Valence governor of this castle, or am I? or to whom do you imagine you are responsible for answering such questions as I may put to you?"

"Nay," replied the archer, secretly not displeased at seeing De Walton show some little jealousy of his own authority, "believe me, Sir Knight, that I know my own station and your worship's, and that I am not now to be told to whom I owe obedience."

"To the study then, and let us find the man," said the governor.

"A fine matter indeed," subjoined Greenleaf, following him, "that your worship should have to go in person to look after the arrest of so mean an individual. But your honour is right; these minstrels are often jugglers, and possess the power of making their escape by means

which borrel* folk like myself are disposed to attribute to necromancy.”

Without attending to these last words, Sir John de Walton set forth towards the study, walking at a quick pace, as if this conversation had augmented his desire to find himself in possession of the person of the suspected minstrel.

Traversing the ancient passages of the castle, the governor had no difficulty in reaching the study, which was strongly vaulted with stone, and furnished with a sort of iron cabinet, intended for the preservation of articles and papers of value, in case of fire. Here he found the minstrel seated at a small table, sustaining before him a manuscript, apparently of great antiquity, from which he seemed engaged in making extracts. The windows of the room were very small, and still showed some traces that they had originally been glazed with a painted history of Saint Bride—another mark of the devotion of the great family of Douglas to their tutelar saint.

* Unlearned.

The minstrel, who had seemed deeply wrapt in the contemplation of his task, on being disturbed by the unlooked-for entrance of Sir John de Walton, rose with every mark of respect and humility, and, remaining standing in the governor's presence, appeared to wait for his interrogations, as if he had anticipated that the visit concerned himself particularly.

"I am to suppose, Sir Minstrel," said Sir John de Walton, "that you have been successful in your search, and have found the roll of poetry or prophecies that you proposed to search after, amongst these broken shelves and tattered volumes?"

"More successful than I could have expected," replied the minstrel, "considering the effects of the conflagration. This, Sir Knight, is apparently the fatal volume for which I sought, and strange it is, considering the heavy chance of other books contained in this library, that I have been able to find a few though imperfect fragments of it."

"Since, therefore, you have been permitted to indulge your curiosity," said the governor,

“I trust, minstrel, you will have no objection to satisfy mine?”

The minstrel replied with the same humility, “that if there was any thing within the poor compass of his skill which could gratify Sir John de Walton in any degree, he would but reach his lute, and presently obey his commands.”

“You mistake, sir,” said Sir John, somewhat harshly. “I am none of those who have hours to spend in listening to tales or music of former days; my life has hardly given me time enough for learning the duties of my profession, far less has it allowed me leisure for such twangling follies. I care not who knows it, but my ear is so incapable of judging of your art, which you doubtless think a noble one, that I can scarcely tell the modulation of one tune from another.”

“In that case,” replied the minstrel composedly, “I can hardly promise myself the pleasure of affording your worship the amusement which I might otherwise have done.”

“Nor do I look for any at your hand,” said the governor, advancing a step nearer to him, and speaking in a sterner tone. “I want informa-

tion, sir, which I am assured you can give me, if you incline ; and it is my duty to tell you, that if you show unwillingness to speak the truth, I know means by which it will become my painful duty to extort it in a more disagreeable manner than I would wish."

" If your questions, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, " be such as I can or ought to answer, there shall be no occasion to put them more than once. If they are such as I cannot or ought not to reply to, believe me that no threats of violence will extort an answer from me."

" You speak boldly," said Sir John de Walton ; " but take my word for it, that your courage will be put to the test. I am as little fond of proceeding to such extremities as you can be of undergoing them, but such will be the natural consequence of your own obstinacy. I therefore ask you, whether Bertram be your real name—whether you have any other profession than that of a travelling minstrel—and, lastly, whether you have any acquaintance or connexion with any Englishman or Scottishman beyond the walls of this Castle of Douglas ?"

“To these questions,” replied the minstrel, “I have already answered the worshipful knight, Sir Aymer de Valence, and, having fully satisfied him, it is not, I conceive, necessary that I should undergo a second examination; nor is it consistent either with your worship’s honour, or that of the lieutenant-governor, that such a re-examination should take place.”

“You are very considerate,” replied the governor, “of my honour and of that of Sir Aymer de Valence. Take my word for it, they are both in perfect safety in our own keeping, and may dispense with your attention. I ask you, will you answer the enquiries which it is my duty to make, or am I to enforce obedience by putting you under the penalties of the question? I have already, it is my duty to say, seen the answers you have returned to my lieutenant, and they do not satisfy me.”

He at the same time clapped his hands, and two or three archers showed themselves, stripped of their tunics, and only attired in their shirts and hose.

“I understand,” said the minstrel, “that you

intend to inflict upon me a punishment which is foreign to the genius of the English laws, in that no proof is adduced of my guilt. I have already told that I am by birth an Englishman, by profession a minstrel, and that I am totally unconnected with any person likely to nourish any design against this Castle of Douglas, Sir John de Walton, or his garrison. What answers you may extort from me by bodily agony, I cannot, to speak as a plain-dealing Christian, hold myself responsible for. I think that I can endure as much pain as any one; I am sure that I never yet felt a degree of agony, that I would not willingly prefer to breaking my plighted word, or becoming a false informer against innocent persons; but I own I do not know the extent to which the art of torture may be carried; and though I do not fear you, Sir John de Walton, yet I must acknowledge that I fear myself, since I know not to what extremity your cruelty may be capable of subjecting me, or how far I may be enabled to bear it. I, therefore, in the first place, protest, that I shall in no manner be liable for any words which I may utter in the course of any ex-

amination enforced from me by torture ; and you must therefore, under such circumstances, proceed to the execution of an office, which, permit me to say, is hardly that which I expected to have found thus administered by an accomplished knight like yourself."

"Hark you, sir," replied the governor, "you and I are at issue, and in doing my duty, I ought instantly to proceed to the extremities I have threatened ; but perhaps you yourself feel less reluctance to undergo the examination as proposed, than I shall do in commanding it ; I will therefore consign you for the present to a place of confinement, suitable to one who is suspected of being a spy upon this fortress. Until you are pleased to remove such suspicions, your lodgings and nourishment are those of a prisoner. In the meantime, before subjecting you to the question, take notice, I will myself ride to the Abbey of Saint Bride, and satisfy myself whether the young person whom you would pass as your son, is possessed of the same determination as that which you yourself seem to assert. It may so happen that his examination and yours may throw such

light upon each other as will decidedly prove either your guilt or innocence, without its being confirmed by the use of the extraordinary question. If it be otherwise, tremble for your son's sake, if not for your own.—Have I shaken you, sir?—or do you fear, for your boy's young sinews and joints, the engines which, in your own case, you seem willing to defy?"

"Sir," answered the minstrel, recovering from the momentary emotion he had shown, "I leave it to yourself, as a man of honour and candour, whether you ought, in common fairness, to form a worse opinion of any man, because he is not unwilling to incur, in his own person, severities which he would not desire to be inflicted upon his child, a sickly youth, just recovering from a dangerous disease."

"It is my duty," answered De Walton, after a short pause, "to leave no stone unturned by which this business may be traced to the source; and if thou desirest mercy for thy son, thou wilt thyself most easily attain it, by setting him the example of honesty and plain-dealing."

The minstrel threw himself back on the seat,

as if fully resolved to bear every extremity that could be inflicted, rather than make any farther answer than he had already offered. Sir John de Walton himself seemed in some degree uncertain what might now be his best course. He felt an invincible repugnance to proceed, without due consideration, in what most people would have considered the direct line of his duty, by inflicting the torture both upon father and son ; but, deep as was his sense of devotion towards the King, and numerous as were the hopes and expectations he had formed upon the strict discharge of his present high trust, he could not resolve upon having recourse at once to this cruel method of cutting the knot. Bertram's appearance was venerable, and his power of words not unworthy of his aspect and bearing. The governor remembered that Aymer de Valence, whose judgment in general it was impossible to deny, had described him as one of those rare individuals, who vindicated the honour of a corrupted profession by their personal good behaviour ; and he acknowledged to himself, that there was gross cruelty and injustice in refusing to admit the prisoner to the credit of being a true and

honest man, until, by way of proving his rectitude, he had strained every sinew, and crushed every joint in his body, as well as those of his son. "I have no touchstone," he said internally, "which can distinguish truth from falsehood; the Bruce and his followers are on the alert,—he has certainly equipped the galleys which lay at Rachrin during winter. This story, too, of Greenleaf, about arms being procured for a new insurrection, tallies strangely with the appearance of that savage-looking forester at the hunt; and all tends to show, that something is upon the anvil which it is my duty to provide against. I will, therefore, pass over no circumstance by which I can affect the mind through hope or fear; but, please God to give me light from any other source, I will not think it lawful to torment these unfortunate, and, it may yet be, honest men." He accordingly took his departure from the library, whispering a word to Greenleaf respecting the prisoner.

He had reached the outward door of the study, and his satellites had already taken the old man into their grasp, when his voice was heard calling upon De Walton to return for a single moment.

“What hast thou to say, sir?” said the governor; “be speedy, for I have already lost more time in listening to thee than I am answerable for, and so I advise thee for thine own sake”——

“I advise thee,” said the minstrel, “for thine own sake, Sir John de Walton, to beware how thou dost insist on thy present purpose, by which thou thyself alone, of all men living, will most severely suffer. If thou harmest a hair of that young man’s head—nay, if thou permittest him to undergo any privation which it is in thy power to prevent, thou wilt, in doing so, prepare for thine own suffering a degree of agony more acute than any thing else in this mortal world could cause thee. I swear by the most blessed objects of our holy religion; I call to witness that holy sepulchre, of which I have been an unworthy visitor, that I speak nothing but the truth, and that thou wilt one day testify thy gratitude for the part I am now acting. It is my interest, as well as yours, to secure you in the safe possession of this castle, although assuredly I know some things respecting it, and

respecting your worship, which I am not at liberty to tell without the consent of that youth. Bring me but a note under his hand, consenting to my taking you into our mystery, and believe me, you will soon see those clouds charmed away ; since there was never a doleful uncertainty which more speedily changed to joy, or a thunder-cloud of adversity which more instantly gave way to sunshine, than would then the suspicions which appear now so formidable.”

He spoke with so much earnestness as to make some impression upon Sir John de Walton, who was once more wholly at a loss to know what line his duty called upon him to pursue.

“ I would most gladly,” said the governor, “ follow out my purpose by the gentlest means in my power ; and I shall bring no further distress upon this poor lad, than thine own obstinacy and his shall appear to deserve. In the meantime, think, Sir Minstrel, that my duty has limits, and if I slack it for a day, it will become thee to exert every effort in thy power to meet my condescension. I will give thee leave to address thy son by a line under thy hand, and I will

await his answer before I proceed farther in this matter, which seems to be very mysterious. Meantime, if thou hast a soul to be saved, I conjure thee to speak the truth, and tell me whether the secrets of which thou seemest to be a too faithful treasurer, have regard to the practices of Douglas, of Bruce, or of any in their names, against this Castle of Douglas?"

The prisoner thought a moment, and then replied—"I am aware, Sir Knight, of the severe charge under which this command is intrusted to your hands, and were it in my power to assist you, as a faithful minstrel and loyal subject, either with hand or tongue, I should feel myself called upon so to do; but so far am I from being the character your suspicions have apprehended, that I should have held it for certain that the Bruce and Douglas had assembled their followers, for the purpose of renouncing their rebellious attempts, and taking their departure for the Holy Land, but for the apparition of the forester, who, I hear, bearded you at the hunting, which impresses upon me the belief, that when so resolute a follower and henchman of the Douglas

was sitting fearless among you, his master and comrades could be at no great distance—how far his intentions could be friendly to you, I must leave it to yourself to judge; only believe me thus far, that the rack, pulley, or pincers, would not have compelled me to act the informer, or adviser, in a quarrel wherein I have little or no share, if I had not been desirous of fixing the belief upon you, that you are dealing with a true man, and one who has your welfare at heart.—Meanwhile, permit me to have writing materials, or let my own be restored, for I possess, in some degree, the higher arts of my calling; nor do I fear but that I can procure for you an explanation of these marvels, without much more loss of time.”

“God grant it prove so,” said the governor; “though I see not well how I can hope for so favourable a termination, and I may sustain great harm by trusting too much on the present occasion. My duty, however, requires that, in the mean time, you be removed into strict confinement.”

He handed to the prisoner as he spoke the

writing materials, which had been seized upon by the archers on their first entrance, and then commanded those satellites to unhand the minstrel.

“ I must then,” said Bertram, “ remain subjected to all the severities of a strict captivity? but I deprecate no hardship whatever in my own person, so I may secure you from acting with a degree of rashness, of which you will all your life repent, without the means of atoning.”

“ No more words, minstrel,” said the governor; “ but since I have made my choice, perhaps a very dangerous one for myself, let us carry this spell into execution, which thou sayest is to serve me, as mariners say that oil spread upon the raging billows will assuage their fury.”

CHAPTER III.

* * * * *

Beware ! beware ! of the Black Friar.

He still retains his sway,

For he is yet the church's heir by right,

Whoever may be the lay.

Amundeville is lord by day,

But the monk is lord by night,

Nor wine nor wassel could raise a vassal

To question that friar's right.

Don Juan, Canto xvii.

THE minstrel made no vain boast of the skill which he possessed in the use of pen and ink. In fact, no priest of the time could have produced his little scroll more speedily, more neatly composed, or more fairly written, than were the lines addressed "To the youth called Augustine, son of Bertram the Minstrel."

"I have not folded this letter," said he, "nor tied it with silk, for it is not expressed so as to explain the mystery to you ; nor, to speak frank-

ly, do I think that it can convey to you any intelligence ; but it may be satisfactory to show you what the letter does not contain, and that it is written from and to a person who both mean kindly towards you and your garrison."

"That," said the governor, "is a deception which is easily practised ; it tends, however, to show, though not with certainty, that you are disposed to act upon good faith, and until the contrary appear, I shall consider it a point of duty to treat you with as much gentleness as the matter admits of. Meantime, I will myself ride to the Abbey of Saint Bride, and in person examine the young prisoner, and as you say he has the power, so I pray to Heaven he may have the will, to read this riddle, which seems to throw us all into confusion." So saying, he ordered his horse, and while it was getting ready, he perused with great composure the minstrel's letter. Its contents ran thus :—

"DEAR AUGUSTINE,

"Sir John de Walton, the governor of this castle, has conceived those suspicions which I

pointed out as likely to be the consequence of our coming to this country without an avowed errand. I at least am seized, and threatened with examination under torture, to force me to tell the purpose of our journey ; but they shall tear my flesh from my bones, ere they force me to break the oath which I have taken. And the purport of this letter is to apprise you of the danger in which you stand of being placed in similar circumstances, unless you are disposed to authorize me to make the discovery to this knight ; but on this subject you have only to express your own wishes, being assured they shall be in every respect attended to by your devoted

“ BERTRAM.”

This letter did not throw the smallest light upon the mystery of the writer. The governor read it more than once, and turned it repeatedly in his hand, as if he had hoped by that mechanical process to draw something from the missive, which at a first view the words did not express ; but as no result of this sort appeared, De Walton retired to the hall, where he in-

formed Sir Aymer de Valence, that he was going abroad as far as the Abbey of Saint Bride, and that he would be obliged by his taking upon him the duties of governor during his absence. Sir Aymer, of course, intimated his acquiescence in the charge, and the state of disunion in which they stood to each other, permitted no further explanation.

Upon the arrival of Sir John de Walton, at the dilapidated shrine, the abbot, with trembling haste, made it his business immediately to attend the commander of the English garrison, upon whom, for the present, their house depended for every indulgence they experienced, as well as for the subsistence and protection necessary to them in so perilous a period. Having interrogated this old man respecting the youth residing in the abbey, De Walton was informed that he had been indisposed since left there by his father, Bertram, a minstrel. It appeared to the abbot, that his indisposition might be of that contagious kind which, at that period, ravaged the English Borders, and made some incursions into Scotland, where it afterwards worked a fear-

ful progress. After some farther conversation, Sir John de Walton put into the abbot's hand the letter to the young person under his roof, on delivering which to Augustine, the reverend father was charged with a message to the English governor, so bold, that he was afraid to be the bearer of it. It signified, that the youth could not, and would not, at that moment, receive the English knight; but that, if he came back on the morrow after mass, it was probable he might learn something of what was requested.

“ This is not an answer,” said Sir John de Walton, “ to be sent by a boy like this to a person in my charge; and methinks, Father Abbot, you consult your own safety but slenderly in delivering such an insolent message.”

The abbot trembled under the folds of his large coarse habit; and De Walton, imagining that his discomposure was the consequence of guilty fear, called upon him to remember the duties which he owed to England, the benefits which he had received from himself, and the probable consequence of taking part in a pert

boy's insolent defiance of the power of the governor of the province.

The abbot vindicated himself from these charges with the utmost anxiety. He pledged his sacred word, that the inconsiderate character of the boy's message was owing to the waywardness arising from indisposition. He reminded the governor that, as a Christian and an Englishman, he had duties to observe towards the community of Saint Bride, which had never given the English government the least subject of complaint. As he spoke, the churchman seemed to gather courage from the immunities of his order. He said he could not permit a sick boy, who had taken refuge within the sanctuary of the church, to be seized or subjected to any species of force, unless he was accused of a specific crime, capable of being immediately proved. The Douglasses, a headstrong race, had, in former days, uniformly respected the sanctuary of Saint Bride, and it was not to be supposed that the King of England, the dutiful and obedient child of the Church of Rome, would act with less veneration for her rights, than the followers of a usurper, homi-

cide, and excommunicated person like Robert Bruce.

Walton was considerably shaken with this remonstrance. He knew that, in the circumstances of the times, the Pope had great power in every controversy in which it was his pleasure to interfere. He knew that even in the dispute respecting the supremacy of Scotland, his Holiness had set up a claim to the kingdom, which, in the temper of the times, might perhaps have been deemed superior both to that of Robert Bruce and that of Edward of England, and he conceived his monarch would give him little thanks for any fresh embroilment which might take place with the church. Moreover, it was easy to place a watch, so as to prevent Augustine from escaping during the night; and on the following morning he would be still as effectually in the power of the English governor as if he were seized on by open force at the present moment. Sir John de Walton, however, so far exerted his authority over the abbot, that he engaged, in consideration of the sanctuary being respected for this space of time, that, when it expired, he would be aiding and assist-

ing with his spiritual authority to surrender the youth, should he not allege a sufficient reason to the contrary. This arrangement, which appeared still to flatter the governor with the prospect of an easy termination of this troublesome dispute, induced him to grant the delay which Augustine rather demanded than petitioned for.

“ At your request, Father Abbot, whom I have hitherto found a true man, I will indulge this youth with the grace he asks, before taking him into custody, understanding that he shall not be permitted to leave this place ; and thou art to be responsible to this effect, giving thee, as is reasonable, power to command our little garrison at Hazelside, to which I will send a reinforcement on my return to the Castle, in case it should be necessary to use the strong hand, or circumstances impose upon me other measures.”

“ Worthy Sir Knight,” replied the abbot, “ I have no idea that the frowardness of this youth will render any course necessary, saving that of persuasion ; and I venture to say, that you yourself will in the highest degree approve

of the method in which I shall acquit myself of my present trust."

The abbot went through the duties of hospitality, enumerating what simple cheer the cloister of the convent permitted him to offer to the English knight. Sir John de Walton declined the offer of refreshment, however—took a courteous leave of the churchman, and did not spare his horse until the noble animal had brought him again before the Castle of Douglas. Sir Aymer de Valence met him on the drawbridge, and reported the state of the garrison to be the same in which he had left it, excepting that intimation had been received that twelve or fifteen men were expected on their way to the town of Lanark; and being on march from the neighbourhood of Ayr, would that night take up their quarters at the outpost of Hazelside.

"I am glad of it," replied the governor; "I was about to strengthen that detachment. This stripling, the son of Bertram the minstrel, or whoever he is, has engaged to deliver himself up for examination in the morning. As this party of soldiers are followers of your uncle, Lord Pembroke,

may I request you will ride to meet them, and command them to remain at Hazelside until you make farther enquiries about this youth, who has still to clear up the mystery which hangs about him, and reply to a letter which I delivered with my own hand to the Abbot of Saint Bride. I have shown too much forbearance in this matter, and I trust to your looking to the security of this young man, and convey him hither, with all due care and attention, as being a prisoner of some importance."

"Certainly, Sir John," answered Sir Aymer; "your orders shall be obeyed, since you have none of greater importance for one who hath the honour to be second only to yourself in this place."

"I crave your mercy, Sir Aymer," returned the governor, "if the commission be in any degree beneath your dignity; but it is our misfortune to misunderstand each other, when we endeavour to be most intelligible."

"But what am I to do," said Sir Aymer—" (no way disputing your command, but only

asking for information)—what am I to do, if the Abbot of Saint Bride offers opposition?”

“How!” answered Sir John de Walton; “with the reinforcement from my Lord of Pembroke, you will command at least twenty war-men, with bow and spear, against five or six timid old monks, with only gown and hood.”

“True,” said Sir Aymer, “but ban and ex-communication are sometimes, in the present day, too hard for the mail coat, and I would not willingly be thrown out of the pale of the Christian church.”

“Well, then, thou very suspicious and scrupulous young man,” replied De Walton, “know that if this youth does not deliver himself up to thee of his own accord, the abbot has promised to put him into thy hands.”

There was no further answer to be made, and De Valence, though still thinking himself unnecessarily harassed with the charge of a petty commission, took the sort of half arms which were always used when the knights stirred beyond the walls of the garrison, and proceeded to execute the commands of De Walton. A

horseman or two, together with his squire Fabian, accompanied him.

The evening closed in with one of those Scottish mists which are commonly said to be equal to the showers of happier climates; the path became more and more dark, the hills more wreathed in vapours, and more difficult to traverse; and all the little petty inconveniencies which rendered travelling through the district slow and uncertain, were augmented by the density of the fog which overhung every thing.

Sir Aymer, therefore, occasionally mended his pace, and often incurred the fate of one who is over-late, delaying himself by his efforts to make greater expedition. The knight be-thought himself that he would get into a straight road by passing through the almost deserted town of Douglas,—the inhabitants of which had been treated so severely by the English, in the course of these fierce troubles, that most of those who were capable of bearing arms had left it, and withdrawn themselves to different parts of the country. This almost deserted place was defended by a rude palisade, and a ruder drawbridge,

which gave entrance into streets so narrow, as to admit with difficulty three horses abreast, and evincing with what strictness the ancient lords of the village adhered to their prejudice against fortifications, and their opinion in favour of keeping the field, so quaintly expressed in the well-known proverb of the family,—“ It is better to hear the lark sing than the mouse cheep.” The streets, or rather the lanes, were dark, but for a shifting gleam of moonlight, which, as that planet began to rise, was now and then visible upon some steep and narrow gable. No sound of domestic industry, or domestic festivity, was heard, and no ray of candle or firelight glanced from the windows of the houses; the ancient ordinance called the curfew, which the Conqueror had introduced into England, was at this time in full force in such parts of Scotland as were thought doubtful, and likely to rebel; under which description it need not be said the ancient possessions of the Douglas were most especially regarded. The Church, whose Gothic monuments were of a magnificent character, had been, as far as possible, destroyed by fire; but the ruins, held

together by the weight of the massive stones of which they were composed, still sufficiently evinced the greatness of the family at whose cost it had been raised, and whose bones, from immemorial time, had been entombed in its crypts.

Paying little attention to these relics of departed splendour, Sir Aymer de Valence advanced with his small detachment, and had passed the scattered fragments of the cemetery of the Douglasses, when, to his surprise, the noise of his horse's feet was seemingly replied to by sounds which rung like those of another knightly steed advancing heavily up the street, as if it were to meet him. Valence was unable to conjecture what might be the cause of these warlike sounds; the ring and the clang of armour was distinct, and the heavy tramp of a war-horse was not to be mistaken by the ear of a warrior. The difficulty of keeping soldiers from straying out of quarters by night, would have sufficiently accounted for the appearance of a straggling foot-soldier; but it was more difficult to account for a mounted horseman, in full armour; and such was the apparition which a peculiarly bright

glimpse of moonlight now showed at the bottom of the causewayed hill. Perhaps the unknown warrior obtained at the same time a glance of Aymer de Valence and his armed followers—at least each of them shouted “Who goes there?”—the alarm of the times; and on the instant the deep answers of “St George!” on the one side, and “The Douglas!” on the other, awakened the still echoes of the small and ruinous street, and the silent arches of the dilapidated church. Astonished at a war-cry with which so many recollections were connected, the English knight spurred his horse at full gallop down the steep and broken descent leading out at the south or south-east gate of the town; and it was the work of an instant to call out, “Ho! Saint George! upon the insolent villain, all of you!—To the gate, Fabian, and cut him off from flight!—Saint George! I say, for England! Bows and bills!—bows and bills!” At the same time Aymer de Valence laid in rest his own long lance, which he snatched from the squire by whom it was carried. But the light was seen and gone in an instant, and though De Valence

concluded that the hostile warrior had hardly room to avoid his career, yet he could take no aim for the encounter, unless by mere guess, and continued to plunge down the dark declivity, among shattered stones and other encumbrances, without groping out with his lance the object of his pursuit. He rode, in short, at a broken gallop, a descent of about fifty or sixty yards, without having any reason to suppose that he had met the figure which had appeared to him, although the narrowness of the street scarcely admitted his having passed him, unless both horse and horseman could have melted at the moment of encounter like an air-bubble. The riders of his suite, meanwhile, were struck with a feeling like supernatural terror, which a number of singular adventures had caused most of them to attach to the name of Douglas; and when he reached the gate by which the broken street was terminated, there was none close behind him but Fabian, in whose head no suggestions of a timorous nature could outlive the sound of his dear master's voice.

Here there was a post of English archers, who

were turning out in considerable alarm, when De Valence and his page rode in amongst them. "Villains!" shouted De Valence, "why were ye not upon your duty? Who was it passed through your post even now, with the traitorous cry of 'Douglas?'"

"We know of no such," said the captain of the watch.

"That is to say, you besotted villains," answered the young knight, "you have been drinking, and have slept?"

The men protested the contrary, but in a confused manner, which was far from overcoming De Valence's suspicions. He called loudly to bring cressets, torches, and candles; and the few remaining inhabitants began to make their unwilling appearance, with such various means of giving light as they chanced to possess. They heard the story of the young English knight with wonder; nor, although it was confirmed by all his retinue, did they give credit to the story, more than that the Englishmen wished somehow or other to pick a quarrel with the people of the place, under the pretence of their having

admitted a retainer of their ancient lord by night into the town. They protested, therefore, their innocence of the cause of tumult, and endeavoured to seem active in hastening from house to house, and corner to corner, with their torches, in order to discover the invisible cavalier. The English suspected them no less of treachery, than the Scottish imagined the whole matter a pretext for bringing an accusation, on the part of the young knight, against the citizens. The women, however, who now began to issue from the houses, had a key for the solution of the apparition, which at that time was believed of efficacy sufficient to solve any mystery. "The devil," they said, "must have appeared visibly amongst them;" an explanation which had already occurred to the followers of the young knight; for that a living man and horse, both, as it seemed, of a gigantic size, could be conjured in the twinkling of an eye, and appear in a street secured at one end by the best of the archers, and at the other by the horsemen under Valence himself, was altogether, it seemed, a thing impossible. The inhabitants did not venture to put

their thoughts on the subject into language, for fear of giving offence, and only indicated by a passing word to each other the secret degree of pleasure which they felt in the confusion and embarrassment of the English garrison. Still, however, they continued to affect a great deal of interest in the alarm which De Valence had received, and the anxiety which he expressed to discover the cause.

At length a female voice spoke above the Babel of confused sounds, saying, "Where is the Southern Knight? I am sure that I can tell him where he can find the only person who can help him out of his present difficulty."

"And who is that, good woman?" said Aymer de Valence, who was growing every moment more impatient at the loss of time, which was flying fast, in an investigation which had something in it vexatious, and even ridiculous. At the same time, the sight of an armed partisan of the Douglasses, in their own native town, seemed to bode too serious consequences, if it should be suffered to pass without being probed to the bottom.

"Come hither to me," said the female voice,

“and I will name to you the only person who can explain all matters of this kind that chance in this country.” On this the knight snatched a torch from some of those who were present, and holding it up, descried the person who spoke, a tall woman, who evidently endeavoured to render herself remarkable. When he approached her, she communicated her intelligence in a grave and sententious tone of voice.

“We had once wise men, that could have answered any parables which might have been put to them for explanation in this country side. Whether you yourselves, gentlemen, have not had some hand in weeding them out, good troth, it is not for the like of me to say ; at any rate, good counsel is not so easy come by as it was in this Douglas country, nor, may be, is it a safe thing to pretend to the power of giving it.”

“Good woman,” said De Valence, “if you will give me an explanation of this mystery, I will owe you a kirtle of the best raploch grey.”

“It is not I,” said the old woman, “that pretend to possess the knowledge which may assist you ; but I would fain know that the man whom

I shall name to you shall be skaithless and harmless. Upon your knighthood and your honour, will you promise to me so much?"

"Assuredly," said De Valence, "such a person shall even have thanks and reward, if he is a faithful informer; ay, and pardon, moreover, although he may have listened to any dangerous practices, or been concerned in any plots."

"Oh! not he," replied the female; "it is old Goodman Powheid, who has the charge of the muniments," (meaning probably monuments,) "that is, such part of them as you English have left standing; I mean the old sexton of the kirk of Douglas, who can tell more stories of these old folk, whom your honour is not very fond of hearing named, than would last us from this day till Yule."

"Does any body," said the knight, "know whom it is that this old woman means?"

"I conjecture," replied Fabian, "that she speaks of an old dotard, who is, I think, the general refcree concerning the history and antiquities of this old town, and of the savage family that lived here, perhaps before the flood."

“And who, I dare say,” said the knight, “knows as much about the matter as she herself does. But where is this man? a sexton is he? He may be acquainted with places of concealment, which are often fabricated in Gothic buildings, and known to those whose business calls them to frequent them. Come, my good old dame, bring this man to me; or, what may be better, I will go to him, for we have already spent too much time.”

“Time!” replied the old woman,—“is time an object with your honour? I am sure I can hardly get so much for mine as will hold soul and body together. You are not far from the old man’s house.”

She led the way accordingly, blundering over heaps of rubbish, and encountering all the embarrassments of a ruinous street, in lighting the way to Sir Aymer, who, giving his horse to one of his attendants, and desiring Fabian to be ready at a call, scrambled after as well as the slowness of his guide would permit.

Both were soon involved in the remains of the old church, much dilapidated as it had been by

wanton damage done to it by the soldiery, and so much impeded by rubbish, that the knight marvelled how the old woman could find the way. She kept talking all the while as she stumbled onward. Sometimes she called out in a screeching tone, "Powheid ! Lazarus Powheid !"—and then muttered—"Ay, ay, the old man will be busy with some of his duties, as he calls them ; I wonder he fashes wi' them in these times. But never mind, I warrant they will last for his day, and for mine ; and the times, Lord help us ! for all that I can see, are well enough for those that are to live in them."

"Are you sure, good woman," replied the knight, "that there is any inhabitant in these ruins ? For my part, I should rather suppose that you are taking me to the charnel-house of the dead."

"Maybe you are right," said the old woman, with a ghastly laugh ; "carles and carlines agree weel with funeral vaults and charnel-houses, and when an auld bedral dwells near the dead, he is living, ye ken, among his customers—Halloo ! Powheid ! Lazarus Powheid ! there is

a gentleman would speak with you ;” and she added, with some sort of emphasis, “an English noble gentleman—one of the honourable garrison.”

An old man’s step was now heard advancing, so slowly that the glimmering light which he held in his hand was visible on the ruined walls of the vault some time before it showed the person who bore it.

The shadow of the old man was also projected upon the illuminated wall ere his person came in view ; his dress was in considerable confusion, owing to his having been roused from his bed ; and since artificial light was forbidden by the regulations of the garrison, the natives of Douglas Dale spent in sleep the time that they could not very well get rid of by any other means. The sexton was a tall thin man, emaciated by years and by privations ; his body was bent habitually by his occupation of grave-digging, and his eye naturally inclined downwards to the scene of his labours. His hand sustained the cruise or little lamp, which he held so as to throw light upon his visitant ; at the same time it displayed to the young

knight the features of the person with whom he was now confronted, which, though neither handsome nor pleasing, were strongly marked, sagacious, and venerable, indicating, at the same time, a certain air of dignity, which age, even mere poverty, may be found occasionally to bestow, as conferring that last melancholy species of independence proper to those whose situation can hardly, by any imaginable means, be rendered much worse than years and fortune have already made it. The habit of a lay brother added somewhat of religious importance to his appearance.

“What would you with me, young man?” said the sexton. “Your youthful features, and your gay dress, bespeak one who stands in need of my ministry neither for himself nor for others.”

“I am, indeed,” replied the knight, “a living man, and therefore need not either shovel or pick-axe for my own behoof. I am not, as you see, attired in mourning, and therefore need not your offices in behalf of any friend; I would only ask you a few questions.”

“What you would have done must needs be done, you being at present one of our rulers, and, as I think, a man of authority,” replied the sexton; “follow me this way into my poor habitation; I have had a better in my day; and yet, Heaven knows, it is good enough for me, when many men of much greater consequence must perforce content themselves with worse.”

He opened a lowly door, which was fitted, though irregularly, to serve as the entrance of a vaulted apartment, where it appeared that the old man held, apart from the living world, his wretched and solitary dwelling. The floor, composed of paving stones, laid together with some accuracy, and here and there inscribed with letters and hieroglyphics, as if they had once upon a time served to distinguish sepulchres, was indifferently well swept, and a fire at the upper end directed its smoke into a hole which served for a chimney. The spade and pick-axe (with other tools,) which the chamberlain of mortality makes use of, lay scattered about the apartment, and, with a rude stool or two, and a table, where some inexperienced hand had unquestionably supplied

the labours of the joiner, were nearly the only furniture, if we include the old man's bed of straw, lying in a corner, and discomposed, as if he had been just raised from it. At the lower end of the apartment the wall was almost entirely covered by a large escutcheon, such as is usually hung over the graves of men of very high rank, having the appropriate quarters, to the number of sixteen, each properly blazoned and distinct, placed as ornaments around the principal armorial coat itself.

"Let us sit," said the old man; "the posture will better enable my failing ears to apprehend your meaning, and the asthma will deal with me more mercifully in permitting me to make you understand mine."

A peal of short asthmatic coughs attested the violence of the disorder which he had last named, and the young knight followed his host's example, in sitting down on one of the rickety stools by the side of the fire. The old man brought from one corner of the apartment an apron, which he occasionally wore, full of broken boards in irregular pieces, some of which were

covered with black cloth, or driven full of nails, black, as it might happen, or gilded.

“ You will find this fresh fuel necessary,” said the old man, “ to keep some degree of heat within this waste apartment ; nor are the vapours of mortality, with which this vault is apt to be filled, if the fire is permitted to become extinct, indifferent to the lungs of the dainty and the healthy, like your worship, though to me they are become habitual. The wood will catch fire, although it is some time ere the damps of the grave are overcome by the drier air and the warmth of the chimney.”

Accordingly, the relics of mortality with which the old man had heaped his fireplace, began by degrees to send forth a thick unctuous vapour, which at length leaped to light, and blazing up the aperture, gave a degree of liveliness to the gloomy scene. The blazonry of the huge escutcheon met and returned the rays with as brilliant a reflection as that lugubrious object was capable of, and the whole apartment looked with a fantastic gayety, strangely mingled with the

gloomy ideas which its ornaments were calculated to impress upon the imagination.

“ You are astonished,” said the old man, “ and perhaps, Sir Knight, you have never before seen these relics of the dead applied to the purpose of rendering the living, in some degree, more comfortable than their condition would otherwise admit of.”

“ Comfortable !” returned the Knight of Valence, shrugging his shoulders ; “ I should be sorry, old man, to know that I had a dog that was as indifferently quartered as thou art, whose grey hairs have certainly seen better days.”

“ It may be,” answered the sexton, “ and it may be otherwise ; but it was not, I presume, concerning my own history that your worship seemed disposed to ask me some questions ; and I would venture to enquire, therefore, to whom they have relation ?”

“ I will speak plainly to you,” replied Sir Aymer, “ and you will at once acknowledge the necessity of giving a short and distinct reply. I have even now met in the streets of this village

a person only shown to me by a single flash of light, who had the audacity to display the armorial insignia and utter the war-cry of the Douglasses; nay, if I could trust a transient glance, this daring cavalier had the features and the dark complexion proper to the Douglas. I am referred to thee as to one who possesses means of explaining this extraordinary circumstance, which, as an English knight, and one holding a charge under King Edward, I am particularly called upon to make enquiry into."

"Let me make a distinction," said the old man. "The Douglasses of former generations are my near neighbours, and, according to my superstitious townsmen, my acquaintances and visitors; I can take it upon my conscience to be answerable for their good behaviour, and to become bound that none of the old barons, to whom the roots of that mighty tree may, it is said, be traced, will again disturb with their war-cry the towns or villages of their native country—not one will parade in moonshine the black armour which has long rusted upon their tombs.

' The knights are dust,
And their good swords are rust ;
Their souls are with the saints, we trust.'

Look around, Sir Knight, you have above and around you the men of whom we speak. Beneath us, in a little aisle, (which hath not been opened since these thin grey locks were thick and brown,) there lies the first man whom I can name as memorable among those of this mighty line. It is he whom the Thane of Athol pointed out to the King of Scotland as Sholto Dhu-glass, or the dark iron-coloured man, whose exertions had gained the battle for his native prince ; and who, according to this legend, bequeathed his name to our dale and town, though others say that the race assumed the name of Douglas from the stream so called in unrecorded times, before they had their fastness on its banks. Others, his descendants, called Eachain, or Hector the first, and Orodh, or Hugh, William, the first of that name, and Gilmour, the theme of many a minstrel song, commemorating achievements done under the oriflamme of Charles the Great, Emperor of France, have

all consigned themselves to their last sleep, nor has their memory been sufficiently preserved from the waste of time. Something we know concerning their great deeds, their great power, and, alas ! their great crimes. Something we also know of a Lord of Douglas who sat in a parliament at Forfar, held by King Malcolm the First, and we are aware that from his attachment to hunting the wild hart, he built himself a tower called Blackhouse, in the forest of Ettrick, which perhaps still exists."

" I crave your forgiveness, old man," said the knight, " but I have no time at present to bestow upon the recitation of the pedigree of the House of Douglas. A less matter would hold a well-breathed minstrel in subject for recitation for a calendar month, Sundays and holydays included."

" What other information can you expect from me," said the sexton, " than that respecting those heroes, some of whom it has been my lot to consign to that eternal rest, which will for ever divide the dead from the duties of this world ? I have told you where the race sleep,

down to the reign of the royal Malcolm. I can tell you also of another vault, in which lie Sir John of Douglas-burn, with his son Lord Archibald, and a third William, known by an indenture with Lord Abernethy. Lastly, I can tell you of him to whom that escutcheon, with its appurtenances of splendour and dignity, justly belong. Do you envy that nobleman, whom, if death were in the sound, I would not hesitate to term my honourable patron? and have you any design of dishonouring his remains? It will be a poor victory; nor does it become a knight and nobleman to come in person to enjoy such a triumph over the dead, against whom, when he lived, there were few knights dared spur their horses. He fought in defence of his country, but he had not the good fortune of most of his ancestors, to die on the field of battle. Captivity, sickness, and regret for the misfortunes of his native land, brought his head to the grave in his prison-house, in the land of the stranger."

The old man's voice here became interrupted by emotion, and the English knight found it

difficult to continue his examination in the stern fashion which his duty required.

“ Old man,” he said, “ I do not require from thee this detail, which must be useless to me, as well as painful to thyself. Thou dost but thy duty in rendering justice to thy ancient lord ; but thou hast not yet explained to me why I have met in this town, this very night, and not half an hour since, a person in the arms, and bearing the complexion, of one of the Black Douglasses, who cried his war-cry as if in contempt of his conquerors.”

“ Surely,” replied the sexton, “ it is not my business to explain such a fancy, otherwise than by supposing that the natural fears of the Southron will raise the spectre of a Douglas at any time, when he is within sight of their sepulchre. Methinks, in such a night as this, the fairest cavalier would wear the complexion of this swarthy race ; nor can I hold it wonderful that the war-cry which was once in the throats of so many thousands in this country, should issue upon occasion from the mouth of a single champion.”

“ You are bold, old man,” returned the Eng-

lish knight; “do you consider that your life is in my power, and that it may, in certain cases, be my duty to inflict death with that degree of pain at which humanity shudders?”

The old man rose up slowly in the light of the blazing fire, displaying his emaciated features, which resembled those ascribed by artists to Saint Anthony of the desert; and pointing to the feeble lamp, which he placed upon the coarse table, thus addressed his interrogator, with an appearance of perfect firmness, and something even resembling dignity:—

“Young knight of England, you see that utensil constructed for the purpose of dispensing light amidst these fatal vaults,—it is as frail as any thing can well be, whose flame is supplied by living element, contained in a frame composed of iron. It is doubtless in your power entirely to end its service, by destroying the frame, or extinguishing the light. Threaten it with such annihilation, Sir Knight, and see whether your menace will impress any sense of fear either on the element or the iron. Know that you have no more power over the frail mortal whom you

threaten with similar annihilation. You may tear from my body the skin in which it is now swathed, but although my nerves might glow with agony during the inhuman operation, it would produce no more impression on me than flaying on the stag which an arrow has previously pierced through the heart. My age sets me beyond your cruelty: if you think otherwise, call your agents, and commence your operations; neither threats nor inflictions will enable you to extort from me any thing that I am not ready to tell you of my own accord."

"You trifle with me, old man," said De Valence; "you talk as if you possessed some secret respecting the motions of these Douglasses, who are to you as gods, yet you communicate no intelligence to me whatever."

"You may soon know," replied the old man, "all that a poor sexton has to communicate; and it will not increase your knowledge respecting the living, though it may throw some light upon my proper domains, which are those of the dead. The spirits of the deceased Douglasses do not rest in their graves during the dishonour

of their monuments, and the downfall of their house. That, upon death, the greater part of any line are consigned to the regions of eternal bliss, or of never-ending misery, religion will not suffer us to believe, and amidst a race who had so great a share of worldly triumph and prosperity, we must suppose there have existed many who have been justly subjected to the doom of an intermediate space of punishment. You have destroyed the temples which were built by their posterity to propitiate Heaven for the welfare of their souls ; you have silenced the prayers and stopt the choirs, by the mediation of which the piety of children had sought to appease the wrath of Heaven in behalf of their ancestors; subjected to expiatory fires. Can you wonder that the tormented spirits, thus deprived of the relief which had been proposed to them, should not, according to the common phrase, rest in their graves? Can you wonder they should show themselves like discontented loiterers near to the places which, but for the manner in which you have prosecuted your remorseless warfare, might have ere now afforded them rest? Or do you mar-

vel that these fleshless warriors should interrupt your marches, and do what else their airy nature may permit to disturb your councils, and meet as far as they may the hostilities which you make it your boast to carry on, as well against those who are deceased, as against any who may yet survive your cruelty?"

"Old man," replied Aymer de Valence, "you cannot expect that I am to take for answer a story like this, being a fiction too gross to charm to sleep a schoolboy tormented with the tooth-ach; nevertheless, I thank God that thy doom does not remain in my hands. My squire and two archers shall carry thee captive to the worshipful Sir John de Walton, Governor of the Castle and Valley, that he may deal with thee as seems meet; nor is he a person to believe in your apparitions and ghosts from purgatory.—What ho! Fabian! Come hither, and bring with thee two archers of the guard."

Fabian accordingly, who had waited at the entrance of the ruined building, now found his way, by the light of the old sexton's lamp, and the sound of his master's voice, into the singular

apartment of the old man, the strange decorations of which struck the youth with great surprise and some horror.

“ Take the two archers with thee, Fabian,” said the Knight of Valence, “ and, with their assistance, convey this old man, on horseback, or in a litter, to the presence of the worshipful Sir John de Walton. Tell him what we have seen, which thou didst witness as well as I; and tell him that this old sexton, whom I send to be examined by his superior wisdom, seems to know more than he is willing to disclose respecting our ghostly cavalier, though he will give us no account of him, except intimating that he is a spirit of the old Douglasses from purgatory, to which Sir John de Walton will give what faith he pleases. You may say, that, for my part, my belief is, either that the sexton is crazed by age, want, and enthusiasm, or that he is connected with some plot which the country people are hatching. You may also say that I shall not use much ceremony with the youth under the care of the Abbot of Saint Bride; there is something sus-

picious in all the occurrences that are now passing around us."

Fabian promised obedience; and the knight, pulling him aside, gave him an additional caution, to behave with attention in this business, seeing he must recollect, that neither the judgment of himself, nor that of his master, were apparently held in very much esteem by the governor; and that it would ill become them to make any mistake in a matter where the safety of the castle was perhaps concerned.

"Fear me not, worshipful sir," replied the youth; "I am returning to pure air in the first place, and a good fire in the second, both acceptable exchanges for this dungeon of suffocating vapours and execrable smells. You may trust to my making no delay; a very short time will carry me back to Castle Douglas, even moving with suitable attention to this old man's bones."

"Use him humanely," answered the knight. "And thou, old man, if thou art insensible to threats of personal danger in this matter, remember, that if thou art found paltering with us, thy

punishment will perhaps be more severe than any we can inflict upon thy person."

"Can you administer the torture to the soul?" said the sexton.

"As to thee," answered the knight, "we have that power;—we will dissolve every monastery or religious establishment held for the souls of these Douglasses, and will only allow the religious people to hold their residence there, upon condition of their praying for the soul of King Edward the First of glorious memory, the *mal-leus Scotorum*; and if the Douglasses are deprived of the ghostly benefit of the prayers and services of such shrines, they may term thy obstinacy the cause."

"Such a species of vengeance," answered the old man, in the same bold unsubdued tone which he had hitherto used, "were more worthy of the infernal fiends than of Christian men."

The squire raised his hand. The knight interposed: "Forbear him," he said, "Fabian, he is very old, and perhaps insane.—And you, sexton, remember that the vengeance threatened is lawfully directed towards a family which have been

the obstinate supporters of the excommunicated rebel, who murdered the Red Comyn at the High Church in Dumfries."

So saying, Aymer strode out of the ruins, picking his way with some difficulty—took his horse, which he found at the entrance—repeated a caution to Fabian, to conduct himself with prudence—and, passing on to the south-western gate, gave the strongest injunctions concerning the necessity of keeping a vigilant watch, both by patrols and by sentinels, intimating at the same time, that it must have been neglected during the preceding part of the evening. The men murmured an apology, the confusion of which seemed to express that there had existed some occasion for the reprimand.

Sir Aymer then proceeded on his journey to Hazelside, his train diminished by the absence of Fabian and his assistants. After a hasty, but not a short journey, the knight alighted at Thomas Dickson's, where he found the detachment from Ayr had arrived before him, and were snugly housed for the night. He sent one of the archers to announce his approach to the Abbot of Saint

Bride and his young guest, intimating at the same time, that the archer must keep sight of the latter until he himself arrived at the chapel, which would be instantly.

CHAPTER IV.

When the nightengale singes the wodes waxen grene,
Lef, and gras, and blosme, springeth in April I wene,
And love is to myne herte gone with one speare so kene.
N'ight and day my blood hyt drynkes, myne herte deth me tene.
MSS. Hail. Quoted by Warton.

SIR AYMER DE VALENCE had no sooner followed his archer to the convent of Saint Bride, than he summoned the abbot to his presence, who came with the air of a man who loves his ease, and who is suddenly called from the couch where he has consigned himself to a comfortable repose, at the summons of one whom he does not think it safe to disobey, and to whom he would not disguise his sense of peevishness, if he durst.

“It is a late ride,” he said, “which has brought your worthy honour hither from the castle. May I be informed of the cause, after the arrangement so recently gone into with the governor?”

“It is my hope,” replied the knight, “that

you, Father Abbot, are not already conscious of it; suspicions are afloat, and I myself have this night seen something to confirm them, that some of the obstinate rebels of this country are again setting afoot dangerous practices, to the peril of the garrison; and I come, father, to see whether, in requital of many favours received from the English monarch, you will not merit his bounty and protection, by contributing to the discovery of the designs of his enemies."

"Assuredly so," answered Father Jerome, in an agitated voice. "Most unquestionably my information should stand at your command; that is, if I knew any thing the communication of which could be of advantage to you."

"Father Abbot," replied the English knight, "although it is rash to make myself responsible for a North-country man in these times, yet I own I do consider you as one who has ever been faithfully subject to the King of England, and I willingly hope that you will still continue so."

"And a fine encouragement I have!" said the abbot; "to be called out of my bed at midnight, in this raw weather, to undergo the exa-

mination of a knight, who is the youngest, perhaps, of his own honourable rank, and who will not tell me the subject of the interrogatories, but detains me on this cold pavement, till, according to the opinion of Celsus, the podagra which lurks in my feet may be driven into my stomach, and then good-night to abbacy and examinations from henceforward."

"Good father," said the young man, "the spirit of the times must teach thee patience; recollect that I can feel no pleasure in this duty, and that if an insurrection should take place, the rebels, who are sufficiently displeased with thee for acknowledging the English monarch, would hang thee from thine own steeple to feed the crows; or that, if thou hast secured thy peace by some private compact with the insurgents, the English governor, who will sooner or later gain the advantage, will not fail to treat thee as a rebel to his sovereign."

"It may appear to you, my noble son," answered the abbot, obviously discomposed, "that I am hung up, in this case, on the horns of the dilemma which you have stated; nevertheless, I

protest to you, that if any one accuses me of conspiring with the rebels against the King of England, I am ready, provided you give me time to swallow a potion recommended by Celsus in my perilous case, to answer with the most perfect sincerity every question which thou canst put to me upon that subject." So saying, he called upon a monk who had attended at his levée, and giving him a large key, whispered something in his ear. The cup which the monk brought, was of such capacity as proved Celsus's draught required to be administered in considerable quantity, and a strong smell which it spread through the apartment, accredited the knight's suspicion that the medicine chiefly consisted of what were then termed distilled waters, a preparation known in the monasteries for some time before that comfortable secret had reached the laity in general. The abbot, neither overawed by the strength nor by the quantity of the potion, took it off with what he himself would have called a feeling of solace and pleasance, and his voice became much more composed; he signified himself as comforted extraordinarily by the medicine,

and willing to proceed to answer any questions which could be put to him by his gallant young friend.

“ At present,” said the knight, “ you are aware, father, that strangers travelling through this country, must be the first objects of our suspicions and enquiries. What is, for example, your own opinion of the youth termed Augustine, the son, or calling himself so, of a person called Bertram the minstrel, who has resided for some days in your convent ?”

The abbot heard the question with eyes expressive of surprise at the quarter from which it came.

“ Assuredly,” said he, “ I think of him as a youth who, from any thing I have seen, is of that excellent disposition, both with respect to loyalty and religion, which I should have expected, were I to judge from the estimable person who committed him to my care.”

With this the abbot bowed to the knight, as if he had conceived that this repartee gave him a silencing advantage in any question which could follow upon that subject; and he was

probably, therefore, surprised when Sir Aymer replied as follows:—

“It is very true, Father Abbot, that I myself did recommend this stripling to you as a youth of a harmless disposition, and with respect to whom it would be unnecessary to exercise the strict vigilance extended to others in similar circumstances; but the evidence which seemed to me to vouch for this young man’s innocence, has not appeared so satisfactory to my superior and commander; and it is by his orders that I now make farther enquiries of you. You must think they are of consequence, since we again trouble you, and at so unwonted an hour.”

“I can only protest by my order, and by the veil of Saint Bride,” replied the abbot, the spirit of Celsus appearing to fail his pupil, “that whatever evil may be in this matter, is totally unknown to me—nor could it be extorted from me by racks or implements of torture. Whatever signs of disloyalty may have been evinced by this young man, I have witnessed none of them, although I have been strictly attentive to his behaviour.”

“ In what respect ?” said the knight—“ and what is the result of your observation ?”

“ My answer,” said the abbot of Saint Bride, “ shall be sincere and downright. The youth condescended upon payment of a certain number of gold crowns, not by any means to repay the hospitality of the church of Saint Bride, but merely”——

“ Nay, father,” interrupted the knight, “ you may cut that short, since the governor and I well understand the terms upon which the monks of Saint Bride exercise their hospitality. In what manner, it is more necessary to ask, was it received by this boy ?”

“ With the utmost gentleness and moderation, noble sir,” answered the abbot ; “ indeed, it appeared to me, at first, that he might be a troublesome guest, since the amount of his benevolence to the convent was such as to encourage, and, in some degree, to authorize, his demanding accommodation of a kind superior to that we had to bestow.”

“ In which case,” said Sir Aymer, “ you would have had the discomfort of returning some part of the money you had received ?”

“ That,” replied the abbot, “ would have been a mode of settlement contrary to our vows. What is paid to the treasury of Saint Bridget cannot, agreeably to our rule, be on any account restored. But, noble knight, there was no occasion for this; a crust of white bread and a draught of milk were diet sufficient to nourish this poor youth for a day, and it was my own anxiety for his health that dictated the furnishing of his cell with a softer bed and coverlet than are quite consistent with the rules of our order.”

“ Now hearken to what I say, Sir Abbot, and answer me truly,” said the Knight of Valence — “ What communication has this youth held with the inmates of your convent, or with those beyond your house? Search your memory concerning this, and let me have a distinct answer, for your guest’s safety and your own depend upon it.”

“ As I am a Christian man,” said the abbot, “ I have observed nothing which could give ground for your worship’s suspicions. The boy Augustine, unlike those whom I have observed who have been educated in the world, showed a

marked preference to the company of such sisters as the house of Saint Bride contains, rather than for that of the monks, my brethren, although there are among them pleasant and conversible men."

"Scandal," said the young knight, "might find a reason for that preference."

"Not in the case of the sisters of Saint Bridget," said the abbot, "most of whom have been either sorely misused by time, or their comeliness destroyed by some mishap previously to their being received into the seclusion of the house."

This observation the good father made with some internal movement of mirth, which was apparently excited at the idea of the sisterhood of Saint Bridget becoming attractive to any one by dint of their personal beauty, in which, as it happened, they were all notably, and almost ludicrously, deficient. The English knight, to whom the sisterhood were well known, felt also inclined to smile at this conversation.

"I acquit," he said, "the pious sisterhood of charming, otherwise than by their kind wishes,

and attention to the wants of the suffering stranger."

"Sister Beatrice," continued the father, resuming his gravity, "is indeed blessed with a winning gift of making comfits and syllabubs; but, on minute enquiry, I do not find that the youth has tasted any of them. Neither is sister Ursula so hard favoured by nature, as from the effects of an accident; but your honour knows that when a woman is ugly, the men do not trouble themselves about the cause of her hard favour. I will go, with your leave, and see in what state the youth now is, and summon him before you."

"I request you to do so, father, for the affair is instant; and I earnestly advise you to watch, in the closest manner, this Augustine's behaviour: you cannot be too particular. I will wait your return, and either carry the boy to the castle, or leave him here, as circumstances may seem to require."

The abbot bowed, promised his utmost exertions, and hobbled out of the room to wait on the youth Augustine, in his cell, anxious to favour,

if possible, the wishes of De Valence, whom he looked upon as rendered by circumstances his military patron.

He remained long absent, and Sir Aymer began to be of opinion that the delay was suspicious, when the abbot returned with perplexity and discomposure in his countenance.

“ I crave your pardon for keeping your worship waiting,” said Jerome, with much anxiety ; “ but, I have myself been detained and vexed by unnecessary formalities and scruples on the part of this peevish boy. In the first place, hearing my foot approaching his bedroom, my youth, instead of undoing the door, which would have been but proper respect to my place, on the contrary draws a strong bolt on the inside ; and this fastening, forsooth, has been placed on his chamber by Ursula’s command, that his slumbers might be suitably respected. I intimated to him as I best could, that he must attend you without delay, and prepare to accompany you to the Castle of Douglas ; but he would not answer a single word, save recommending to me patience, to which I was fain to have recourse,

as well as your archer, whom I found standing sentinel before the door of the cell, and contenting himself with the assurance of the sisters that there was no other passage by which Augustine could make his escape. At length the door opens, and my young master presents himself fully arrayed for his journey. The truth is, I think some fresh attack of his malady has affected the youth; he may perhaps be disturbed with some touch of hypochondria, or black choler, a species of dotage of the mind, which is sometimes found concomitant with and symptomatic of this disorder; but he is at present composed, and if your worship chooses to see him, he is at your command."

"Call him hither," said the knight. And a considerable space of time again elapsed ere the eloquence of the abbot, half chiding and half soothing, prevailed on the lady, in her adopted character, to approach the parlour, in which at last she made her appearance, with a countenance on which the marks of tears might still be discovered, and a pettish sullenness, like that of a boy, or, with reverence, that of a girl, who is determined upon

taking her own way in any matter, and equally resolved to give no reason for her doing so. Her hurried levée had not prevented her attending closely to all the mufflings and disguisings by which her pilgrim's dress was arranged, so as to alter her appearance, and effectually disguise her sex. But as civility prevented her wearing her large slouched hat, she necessarily exposed her countenance more than in the open air; and though the knight beheld a most lovely set of features, yet they were not such as were inconsistent with the character she had adopted, and which she had resolved upon maintaining to the last. She had, accordingly, mustered up a degree of courage which was not natural to her, and which she perhaps supported by hopes which her situation hardly admitted. So soon as she found herself in the same apartment with De Valence, she assumed a style of manners, bolder and more determined than she had hitherto displayed.

“Your worship,” she said, addressing him even before he spoke, “is a knight of England, and possessed, doubtless, of the virtues which become that noble station. I am an unfortunate

lad, obliged, by reasons which I am under the necessity of keeping secret, to travel in a dangerous country, where I am suspected, without any just cause, of becoming accessory to plots and conspiracies which are contrary to my own interest, and which my very soul abhors; and which I might safely abjure, by imprecating upon myself all the curses of our religion and renouncing all its promises, if I were accessory to such designs in thought, word, or deed. Nevertheless, you, who will not believe my solemn protestation, are about to proceed against me as a guilty person, and in so doing I must warn you, Sir Knight, that you will commit a great and cruel injustice."

"I shall endeavour to avoid that," said the knight, "by referring the duty to Sir John de Walton, the governor, who will decide what is to be done; in this case, my only duty will be to place you in his hands at Douglas Castle."

"Must you do this?" said Augustine.

"Certainly," replied the knight, "or be answerable for neglecting my duty."

"But if I become bound to answer your loss

with a large sum of money, a large tract of land"——

"No treasure, no land,—supposing such at your disposal," answered the knight, "can atone for disgrace; and besides, boy, how should I trust to your warrant, were my avarice such as would induce me to listen to such proposals?"

"I must then prepare to attend you instantly to the Castle of Douglas, and the presence of Sir John de Walton?" replied Augustine.

"Young man," answered De Valence, "there is no remedy, since, if you delay me longer, I must carry you thither by force."

"What will be the consequence to my father?" said the youth.

"That," replied the knight, "will depend exactly on the nature of your confession and his; something you both have to say, as is evident from the terms of the letter Sir John de Walton conveyed to you; and, I assure you, you were better to speak it out at once, than to risk the consequences of more delay. I can admit of no more trifling; and, believe me, that your fate

will be entirely ruled by your own frankness and candour."

"I must prepare, then, to travel at your command," said the youth. "But this cruel disease still hangs around me, and Abbot Jerome, whose leechcraft is famous, will himself assure you that I cannot travel without danger of my life; and that while I was residing in this convent, I declined every opportunity of exercise which was offered me by the kindness of the garrison at Hazelside, lest I might by mishap bring the contagion among your men."

"The youth says right," said the abbot; "the archers and men-at-arms have more than once sent to invite this lad to join in some of their military games, or to amuse them, perhaps, with some of his minstrelsy; but he has uniformly declined doing so; and, according to my belief, it is the effects of this disorder which have prevented his accepting an indulgence so natural to his age, and in so dull a place as the convent of Saint Bride must needs seem to a youth bred up in the world."

"Do you then hold, reverend father," said

Sir Aymer, "that there is real danger in carrying this youth to the castle to-night, as I proposed?"

"I conceive such danger," replied the abbot, "to exist, not only as it may occasion the relapse of the poor youth himself, but as particularly likely, no preparations having been made, to introduce the infection among your honourable garrison; for it is in these relapses, more than in the first violence of the malady, that it has been found most contagious."

"Then," said the knight, "you must be content, my friend, to give a share of your room to an archer, by way of sentinel."

"I cannot object," said Augustine, "provided my unfortunate vicinity does not endanger the health of the poor soldier."

"He will be as ready to do his duty," said the abbot, "without the door of the apartment as within it; and if the youth should sleep soundly, which the presence of a guard in his chamber might prevent, he is the more likely to answer your purpose on the morrow."

"Let it be so," said Sir Aymer; "so you

are sure that you do not minister any facility of escape."

"The apartment," said the monk, "hath no other entrance than that which is guarded by the archer, but to content you, I shall secure the door in your presence."

"So be it, then," said the Knight of Valence; "this done, I myself will lie down without doffing my mail-shirt, and snatch a sleep till the ruddy dawn calls me again to duty, when you, Augustine, will hold yourself ready to attend me to our Castle of Douglas."

The bells of the convent summoned the inhabitants and inmates of Saint Bride to morning prayers at the first peep of day. When this duty was over, the knight demanded his prisoner. The abbot marshalled him to the door of Augustine's chamber. The sentinel who was stationed there, armed with a brown-bill, or species of partisan, reported that he had heard no motion in the apartment during the whole night. The abbot tapped at the door, but received no answer. He knocked again louder, but the silence was unbroken from within.

“What means this?” said the reverend ruler of the convent of Saint Bride; “my young patient has certainly fallen into a syncope or swoon!”

“I wish, Father Abbot,” said the knight, “that he may not have made his escape instead, an accident which both you and I may be required to answer, since, according to our strict duty, we ought to have kept sight of him, and detained him in close custody until daybreak.”

“I trust your worship,” said the abbot, “only anticipates a misfortune which I cannot think possible.”

“We shall speedily see,” said the knight; and raising his voice, he called aloud, so as to be heard within, “Bring crow-bars and levers, and burst me that door into splinters without an instant’s delay!”

The loudness of his voice, and the stern tone in which he spoke, soon brought around him the brethren of the house, and two or three soldiers of his own party, who were already busy in caparisoning their horses. The displeasure of the young knight was manifested by his flushed fea-

tures, and the abrupt manner in which he again repeated his commands for breaking open the door. This was speedily performed, though it required the application of considerable strength, and as the shattered remains fell crashing into the apartment, De Valence sprung, and the abbot hobbled, into the cell of the prisoner, which, to the fulfilment of their worst suspicions, they found empty.

CHAPTER V.

Where is he? Has the deep earth swallow'd him?
Or hath he melted like some airy phantom
That shuns the approach of morn and the young sun?
Or hath he wrapt him in Cimmerian darkness,
And pass'd beyond the circuit of the sight
With things of the night's shadows?

Anonymous.

THE disappearance of the youth, whose disguise and whose fate have, we hope, inclined our readers to take some interest in him, will require some explanation ere we proceed with the other personages of the story, and we shall set about giving it accordingly.

When Augustine was consigned to his cell for the second time on the preceding evening, both the monk and the young Knight of Valence had seen the key turned upon him, and had heard

him secure the door on the inside with the bolt which had been put on at his request by sister Ursula, in whose affections the youth of Augustine, his extreme handsomeness, and, above all, his indisposition of body and his melancholy of mind, had gained him considerable interest.

So soon, accordingly, as Augustine re-entered his apartment, he was greeted in a whisper by the sister, who, during the interval of his absence, had contrived to slip into the cell, and having tapped herself behind the little bed, came out, with great appearance of joy, to greet the return of the youth. The number of little attentions, the disposal of holly boughs, and such other evergreens as the season permitted, showed the anxiety of the holy sisters to decorate the chamber of their guest, and the greetings of sister Ursula expressed the same friendly interest, at the same time intimating that she was already in some degree in possession of the stranger's mystery.

As Augustine and the holy sister were busied in exchange of confidence, the extraordinary

difference between their countenances and their persons must have struck any one who might have been accidentally a witness of their interview. The dark pilgrim's robe of the disguised female, was not a stronger contrast to the white woollen garment worn by the votaress of Saint Bride, than the visage of the nun, seamed with many a ghastly scar, and the light of one of her eyes extinguished for ever, causing it to roll a sightless luminary in her head, was to the beautiful countenance of Augustine, now bent with a confidential, and even affectionate look, upon the extraordinary features of her companion.

“ You know,” said the supposed Augustine, “ the principal part of my story ; can you, or will you, lend me your assistance ? If not, my dearest sister, you must consent to witness my death, rather than my shame. Yes, sister Ursula, I will not be pointed at by the finger of scorn, as the thoughtless maiden who sacrificed so much for a young man, of whose attachment she was not so well assured as she ought to have been. I will not be dragged before De Walton, for the purpose of being compelled, by threats of torture,

to declare myself the female in honour of whom he holds the Dangerous Castle. No doubt, he might be glad to give his hand in wedlock to a damsel whose dowery is so ample ; but who can tell whether he will regard me with that respect which every woman would wish to command, or pardon that boldness of which I have been guilty, even though its consequences have been in his own favour?"

"Nay, my darling daughter," answered the nun, "comfort yourself ; for in all I can aid you, be assured I will. My means are somewhat more than my present situation may express, and, be assured, they shall be tried to the uttermost. Methinks I still hear that lay which you sung to the other sisters and myself, although I alone, touched by feelings kindred to yours, had the address to comprehend that it told your own tale."

"I am yet surprised," said Augustine, speaking beneath her breath, "how I had the boldness to sing in your ears the lay, which, in fact, was the history of my disgrace."

"Alas ! that you will say so," returned the

nun ; “ there was not a word but what resembled those tales of love and of high-spirited daring which the best minstrels love to celebrate, and the noblest knights and maidens weep at once and smile to hear. The Lady Augusta of Berkely, a great heiress, according to the world, both in land and movable goods, becomes the King’s ward by the death of her parents ; and thus is on the point of being given away in marriage to a minion of the King of England, whom, in these Scottish valleys, we scruple not to call a peremptory tyrant.”

“ I must not say so, my sister,” said the pilgrim ; “ and yet, true it is, that the cousin of the obscure parasite Gaveston, on whom the King wished to confer my poor hand, was neither by birth, merit, or circumstance, worthy of such an alliance. Meantime I heard of the fame of Sir John de Walton ; and I heard of it not with the less interest that his feats of chivalry were said to adorn a knight, who, rich in every thing else, was poor in worldly goods, and in the smiles of fortune. I saw this Sir John de Walton, and I acknowledge that a thought, which had already

intruded itself on my imagination, became, after this interview, by frequent recurrence, more familiar, and more welcome to me. Methought that the daughter of a powerful English family, if she could give away with her hand such wealth as the world spoke of, would more justly and honourably bestow it in remedying the errors of fortune in regard to a gallant knight like De Walton, than in patching the revenues of a beggarly Frenchman, whose only merit was in being the kinsman of a man who was very generally detested by the whole kingdom of England, excepting the infatuated monarch himself."

"Nobly designed, my daughter," said the nun; "what more worthy of a noble heart, possessing riches, beauty, birth, and rank, than to confer them all upon indigent and chivalrous merit?"

"Such, dearest sister, was my intention," replied Augustine; "but I have, perhaps, scarce sufficiently explained the manner in which I meant to proceed. By the advice of an aged minstrel of our house, the same who is now prisoner at Douglas, I caused exhibit a large feast upon Christmas eve, and sent invitations abroad to the

young knights of noble name who were known to spend their leisure in quest of arms and adventures. When the tables were drawn, and the feast concluded, Bertram, as had been before devised, was called upon to take his harp. He sung, receiving from all who were present the attention due to a minstrel of so much fame. The theme which he chose, was the frequent capture of this Douglas Castle, or, as the poet termed it, Castle Dangerous. ‘Where are the champions of the renowned Edward the First,’ said the minstrel, ‘when the realm of England cannot furnish a man brave enough, or sufficiently expert in the wars, to defend a miserable hamlet of the North against the Scottish rebels, who have vowed to retake it over our soldiers’ heads ere the year rolls to an end? Where are the noble ladies, whose smiles used to give countenance to the Knights of Saint George’s Cross? Alas! the spirit of love and of chivalry is alike dead amongst us—our knights are limited to petty enterprises—and our noblest heiresses are given as prizes to strangers, as if their own country had no one to deserve them.’—

Here stopt the harp ; and I shame to say, that I myself, as if moved to enthusiasm by the song of the minstrel, arose, and taking from my neck the chain of gold which supported a crucifix of special sanctity, I made my vow, always under the King's permission, that I would give my hand, and the inheritance of my fathers, to the good knight, being of noble birth and lineage, who should keep the Castle of Douglas in the King of England's name, for a year and a day. I sat down, my dearest sister, deafened with the jubilee in which my guests expressed their applause of my supposed patriotism. Yet some degree of pause took place amidst the young knights, who might reasonably have been supposed ready to embrace this offer, although at the risk of being encumbered with Augusta of Berkely."

" Shame on the man," said sister Ursula, " who should think so ! Put your beauty alone, my dearest, into consideration, and a true knight ought to have embraced the dangers of twenty Castles of Douglas, rather than let such an in-

valuable opportunity of gaining your favour be lost."

"It may be that some in reality thought so," said the pilgrim; "but it was supposed that the king's favour might be lost by those who seemed too anxious to thwart his royal purpose upon his ward's hand. At any rate, greatly to my joy, the only person who availed himself of the offer I had made, was Sir John de Walton; and as his offer was guarded by a clause, saving and reserving the king's approbation, I hope he has not suffered any diminution of Edward's favour."

"Assure yourself, noble and high-spirited young lady," replied the nun, "that there is no fear of thy generous devotion hurting thy lover with the King of England. Something we hear concerning worldly passages, even in this remote nook of Saint Bride's cloister; and the report goes among the English soldiers that their king was indeed offended at your putting your will in opposition to his own; yet, on the other hand, this preferred lover, Sir John de Walton, was a man of such extensive fame, and your offer was so much in the character of better but not

forgotten times, that even a king could not at the beginning of a long and stubborn war deprive an errant cavalier of his bride, if she should be duly won by his sword and lance."

" Ah ! dearest sister Ursula !" sighed the disguised pilgrim, " but, on the other hand, how much time must pass by in the siege, by defeating which that suit must needs be advanced ? While I sat in my lonely castle, tidings after tidings came to astound me with the numerous, or rather the constant dangers, with which my lover was surrounded, until at length, in a moment I think of madness, I resolved to set out in this masculine disguise ; and having myself with my own eyes seen in what situation I had placed my knight, I determined to take such measures in respect to shortening the term of his trial, or otherwise, as a sight of Douglas Castle, and—why should I deny it ?—of Sir John de Walton, might suggest. Perhaps you, my dearest sister, may not so well understand my being tempted into flinching from the resolution which I had laid down for my own honour, and that of my lover ; but consider, that my resolu-

tion was the consequence of a moment of excitation, and that the course which I adopted was the conclusion of a long, wasting, sickening state of uncertainty, the effect of which was to weaken the nerves which were once highly strung with love of my country as I thought; but in reality, alas! with fond and anxious feelings of a more selfish description."

"Alas!" said sister Ursula, evincing the strongest symptoms of interest and compassion, "am I the person, dearest child, whom you suspect of insensibility to the distresses which are the fruit of true love? Do you suppose that the air which is breathed within these walls has the property, upon the female heart, of such marvellous fountains as they say change into stone the substances which are immersed into their waters? Hear my tale, and judge if it can be thus with one who possesses my causes of grief. And do not fear for loss of time; we must let our neighbours at Hazelside be settled for the evening, ere I furnish you with the means of escape; and you must have a trusty guide, for whose fidelity I will be responsible, to direct

your path through these woods, and protect you in case of any danger, too likely to occur in these troublesome times. It will thus be nigh an hour ere you depart; and sure I am that in no manner can you spend the time better than in listening to distresses too similar to your own, and flowing from the source of disappointed affection which you must needs sympathize with."

The distresses of the Lady Augusta did not prevent her being in some degree affected almost ludicrously with the singular contrast between the hideous countenance of this victim of the tender passion, and the cause to which she imputed her sorrows; but it was not a moment for giving way to a sense of the ridiculous, which would have been in the highest degree offensive to the sister of Saint Bride, whose good-will she had so many reasons to conciliate. She readily, therefore, succeeded in preparing herself to listen to the votary with an appearance of sympathy, which might reward that which she had herself experienced at the hands of sister Ursula; while the unfortunate recluse, with an agitation which

made her ugliness still more conspicuous, narrated nearly in a whisper the following circumstances :—

“ My misfortunes commenced long before I was called sister Ursula, or secluded as a votaress within these walls. My father was a noble Norman, who, like many of his countrymen, sought and found fortune at the court of the King of Scotland. He was endowed with the sheriffdom of this county, and Maurice de Hattely, or Hautlieu, was numbered among the wealthy and powerful barons of Scotland. Wherefore should I deny it, that the daughter of this baron, then called Margaret de Hautlieu, was also distinguished among the great and fair of the land? It can be no censurable vanity which provokes me to speak the truth, and unless I tell it myself, you could hardly suspect what a resemblance I once bore even to the lovely Lady Augusta of Berkely. About this time broke out those unfortunate feuds of Bruce and Baliol, which have been so long the curse of this country. My father, determined in his choice of party by the arguments of his wealthy kinsmen at the

court of Edward, embraced with passion the faction of the English interest, and became one of the keenest partisans at first of John Baliol, and afterwards of the English monarch. None among the Anglocised-Scottish, as his party was called, were so zealous as he for the red cross, and no one was more detested by his countrymen who followed the national standard of Saint Andrew and the patriot Wallace. Among those soldiers of the soil, Malcolm Fleming of Biggar was one of the most distinguished by his noble birth, his high acquirements, and his fame in chivalry. I saw him; and the ghastly spectre who now addresses you must not be ashamed to say, that she loved, and was beloved by, one of the handsomest youths in Scotland. Our attachment was discovered to my father almost ere we had owned it to each other, and he was furious both against my lover and myself; he placed me under the charge of a religious woman of this rule, and I was immured within the house of Saint Bride, where my father shamed not to announce he would cause me to take the veil by force unless I agreed to wed a

youth bred at the English court, his nephew; and, as Heaven had granted him no son, the heir, as he had resolved, of the house of Hautlieu. I was not long in making my election. I protested that death should be my choice, rather than any other husband excepting Malcolm Fleming. Neither was my lover less faithful; he found means to communicate to me a particular night on which he proposed to attempt to storm the nunnery of Saint Bride, and carry me from hence to freedom and the greenwood, of which Wallace was generally called the king. In an evil hour—an hour, I think, of infatuation and witchery—I suffered the abbess to wheedle the secret out of me, which I might have been sensible would appear more horribly flagitious to her than to any other woman that breathed; but I had not taken the vows, and I thought Wallace and Fleming had the same charms for every body as for me, and the artful woman gave me reason to believe that her loyalty to Bruce was without a flaw of suspicion, and she took part in a plot, of which my freedom was the object. The abbess engaged to have the English guards removed

to a distance, and in appearance the troops were withdrawn. Accordingly, in the middle of the night appointed, the window of my cell, which was two stories from the ground, was opened without noise; and never were my eyes more gladdened than, as ready disguised and arrayed for flight, even in a horseman's dress, like yourself, fairest Lady Augusta, I saw Malcolm Fleming spring into the apartment. He rushed towards me; but at the same time my father with ten of his strongest men filled the room, and cried their war-cry of Baliol. Blows were instantly dealt on every side. A form like a giant, however, appeared in the midst of the tumult, and distinguished himself even to my half-giddy eye, by the ease with which he bore down and dispersed those who fought against our freedom. My father alone offered an opposition which threatened to prove fatal to him; for Wallace, it was said, could foil any two martial champions that ever drew sword. Brushing from him the armed men, as a lady would drive away with her fan a swarm of troublesome flies, he secured me in one arm, used his other for our mutual pro-

tection, and I found myself in the act of being borne in safety down the ladder by which my deliverers had ascended from without ;—but an evil fate awaited this attempt.

“ My father, whom the Champion of Scotland had spared for my sake, or rather for Fleming’s, gained by his victor’s compassion and lenity a fearful advantage, and made a remorseless use of it. Having only his left hand to oppose to the maniac attempts of my father, even the strength of Wallace could not prevent the assailant, with all the energy of desperation, from throwing down the ladder, on which his daughter was perched like a dove in the grasp of an eagle. The champion saw our danger, and exerting his inimitable strength and agility, cleared himself and me from the ladder, and leaped free of the moat of the convent, into which we must otherwise have been precipitated. The Champion of Scotland was saved in the desperate attempt, but I, who fell among a heap of stones and rubbish, I, the disobedient daughter, wellnigh the apostate vestal, waked only from a long bed of sickness, to find myself the disfigured wretch

which you now see me. I then learned that Malcolm had escaped from the fray, and shortly after I heard, with feelings less keen perhaps than they ought to have been, that my father was slain in one of the endless battles which took place between the contending factions. If he had lived, I might have submitted to the completion of my fate ; but since he was no more, I felt that it would be a preferable lot to be a beggar in the streets of a Scottish village, than an Abbess in this miserable house of Saint Bride ; nor was even that poor object of ambition, on which my father used to expatiate when desirous of persuading me to enter the monastic state, by milder means than throwing me off the battlements, long open to me. The old abbess died of a cold caught the evening of the fray ; and the place, which might have been kept open until I was capable of filling it, was disposed of otherwise, when the English thought fit to reform, as they termed it, the discipline of the house ; and, instead of electing a new abbess, sent hither two or three friendly monks, who have now the absolute government of the community, and wield

it entirely according to the pleasure of the English. But I, for one, who have had the honour to be supported by the arms of the Champion of my country, will not remain here to be commanded by this Abbot Jerome. I will go forth; nor do I fear to find relations and friends, who will provide a more fitting place of refuge for Margaret de Hautlieu than the convent of Saint Bride; you, too, dearest lady, shall obtain your freedom, and it will be well to leave such information as will make Sir John de Walton aware of the devotion with which his happy fate has inspired you."

"It is not, then, your own intention," said the Lady Augusta, "to return into the world again, and you are about to renounce the lover, in a union with whom you and he once saw your joint happiness?"

"It is a question, my dearest child," said sister Ursula, "which I dare not ask myself, and to which I am absolutely uncertain what answer I should return. I have not taken the final and irrevocable vows; I have done nothing to alter my situation with regard to Malcolm

Fleming: He also, by the vows plighted in the Chancery of Heaven, is my affianced bridegroom, nor am I conscious that I less deserve his faith, in any respect now, than at the moment when it was pledged to me ; but, I confess, dearest lady, that rumours have reached me, which sting me to the quick ; the reports of my wounds and scars are said to have estranged the Knight of my choice. I am now indeed poor," she added, with a sigh, " and I am no longer possessed of those personal charms, which they say attract the love, and fix the fidelity, of the other sex. I teach myself, therefore, to think, in my moments of settled resolution, that all betwixt me and Malcolm Fleming is at an end, saving good wishes on the part of both towards the other ; and yet there is a sensation in my bosom which whispers, in spite of my reason, that if I absolutely believed that which I now say, there would be no object on earth worthy my living for in order to attain it. This insinuating prepossession whispers to my secret soul, and in very opposition to my reason and understanding, that Malcolm Fleming, who could pledge his all upon the

service of his country, is incapable of nourishing the versatile affection of an ordinary, a coarse, or a venal character. Methinks, were the difference upon his part instead of mine, he would not lose his interest in my eyes, because he was seamed with honourable scars, obtained in asserting the freedom of his choice, but that such wounds would, in my opinion, add to his merit, whatever they took away from his personal comeliness. Ideas rise on my soul, as if Malcolm and Margaret might yet be to each other all that their affections once anticipated with so much security, and that a change, which took nothing from the honour and virtue of the beloved person, must rather add to, than diminish, the charms of the union. Look at me, dearest Lady Augusta!—look me—if you have courage—full in the face, and tell me whether I do not rave when my fancy is thus converting mere possibilities into that which is natural and probable.”

The Lady of Berkely, conscious of the necessity, raised her eyes on the unfortunate nun, afraid of losing her own chance of deliverance by the mode in which she should conduct her-

self in this crisis; yet not willing at the same time to flatter the unfortunate Ursula, with suggesting ideas for which her own sense told her she could hardly find any rational grounds. But her imagination, stored with the minstrelsy of the time, brought back to her recollection the Loathly Lady in "The Marriage of Sir Gawain," and she conducted her answer in the following manner :—

" You ask me, my dear Lady Margaret, a trying question, which it would be unfriendly to answer otherwise than sincerely, and most cruel to answer with too much rashness. It is true, that what is called beauty is the first quality on which we of the weaker sex learn to set a value ; we are flattered by the imputation of personal charms, whether we actually possess them or not ; and no doubt we learn to place upon them a great deal more consequence than in reality is found to belong to them. Women, however, even such as are held by their own sex, and perhaps in secret by themselves, as devoid of all pretensions to beauty, have been known to become," from their understanding,

their talents, or their accomplishments, the undoubted objects of the warmest attachment. Wherefore then should you, in the mere rashness of your apprehension, deem it impossible that your Malcolm Fleming should be made of that porcelain clay of the earth, which despises the passing captivations of outward form, in comparison to the charms of true affection, and the excellence of talents and virtue?"

The nun pressed her companion's hand to her bosom, and answered her with a deep sigh.

"I fear," she said, "you flatter me, and yet, in a crisis like this, it does one good to be flattered, even as cordials, otherwise dangerous to the constitution, are wisely given to support a patient through a paroxysm of agony, and enable him to endure at least what they cannot cure. Answer me only one question, and it will be time we drop this conversation. Could you, sweet lady, you upon whom fortune has bestowed so many charms; could any argument make you patient under the irretrievable loss of your personal advantages, with the concomitant loss, as

in my case is most probable, of that lover for whom you have already done so much?"

The English lady cast her eyes again on her friend, and could not help shuddering a little at the thought of her own beautiful countenance being exchanged for the seamed and scarred features of the Lady of Hautlieu, irregularly lighted by the beams of a single eye.

"Believe me," she said, looking solemnly upwards, "that even in the case which you suppose, I would not sorrow so much for myself, as I would for the poor-spirited thoughts of the lover who could leave me because those transitory charms (which must in any case ere long take their departure) had fled ere yet the bridal day. It is, however, concealed by the decrees of Providence, in what manner, or to what extent, other persons, with whose disposition we are not fully acquainted, may be affected by such changes. I can only assure you that my hopes go with yours, and that there is no difficulty which shall remain in your path in future, if it is in my power to remove it.—Hark!"——

"It is the signal of our freedom," replied

Ursula, giving attention to something resembling the whoop of the night owl. "We must prepare to leave the convent in a few minutes. Have you any thing to take with you?"

"Nothing," answered the Lady of Berkely, "except the few valuables, which I scarce know why I brought with me on my flight hither. This scroll, which I shall leave behind, gives my faithful minstrel permission to save himself, by confessing to Sir John de Walton who the person really is whom he has had within his reach."

"It is strange," said the novice of Saint Bride, "through what extraordinary labyrinths this Love, this Will-of-the-Wisp, guides his votaries. Take heed as you descend; this trapdoor, carefully concealed, curiously jointed and oiled, leads to a secret postern, where I conceive the horses already wait, which will enable us speedily to bid adieu to Saint Bride's—Heaven's blessing on her, and on her convent! We can have no advantage from any light, until we are in the open air."

During this time, sister Ursula, to give her for the last time her conventual name, exchanged

her stole, or loose upper garment, for the more succinct cloak and hood of a horseman. She led the way through divers passages, studiously complicated, until the Lady of Berkely, with throbbing heart, stood in the pale and doubtful moonlight, which was shining with grey uncertainty upon the walls of the ancient building. The imitation of an owlet's cry directed them to a neighbouring large elm, and on approaching it, they were aware of three horses, held by one, concerning whom they could only see that he was tall, strong, and accoutred in the dress of a man-at-arms.

“The sooner,” he said, “we are gone from this place, Lady Margaret, it is so much the better. You have only to direct the course which we shall hold.”

Lady Margaret's answer was given beneath her breath; and replied to with a caution from the guide to ride slowly and silently for the first quarter of an hour, by which time inhabited places would be left at a distance.

CHAPTER VI.

GREAT was the astonishment of the young Knight of Valence and the reverend Father Jerome, when, upon breaking into the cell, they discovered the youthful pilgrim's absence ; and, from the garments which were left, saw every reason to think that the one-eyed novice, sister Ursula, had accompanied him in his escape from custody. A thousand thoughts thronged upon Sir Aymer, how shamefully he had suffered himself to be outwitted by the artifices of a boy and of a novice. His reverend companion in error felt no less contrition for having recommended to the knight a mild exercise of his authority. Father Jerome had obtained his preferment as abbot upon the faith of his zeal for the cause of the English monarch, with the affected interest in which he

was at a loss to reconcile his proceedings of the last night. A hurried enquiry took place, from which little could be learned, save that the young pilgrim had most certainly gone off with the Lady Margaret de Hautlieu, an incident at which the females of the convent expressed surprise, mingled with a great deal of horror; while that of the males, whom the news soon reached, was qualified with a degree of wonder, which seemed to be founded upon the very different personal appearance of the two fugitives.

“Sacred Virgin,” said a nun, “who could have conceived the hopeful votaress, sister Ursula, so lately drowned in tears for her father’s untimely fate, capable of eloping with a young boy, scarce fourteen years old?”

“And, holy Saint Bride,” said the Abbot Jerome, “what could have made so handsome a young man lend his arm to assist such a nightmare as sister Ursula in the commission of so great an enormity? Certainly he can neither plead temptation nor seduction, but must have gone, as the worldly phrase is,—to the devil with a dishclout.”

“ I must disperse the soldiers to pursue the fugitives,” said De Valence, “ unless this letter, which the pilgrim must have left behind him, shall contain some explanation respecting our mysterious prisoner.”

After viewing the contents with some surprise, he read aloud,—“ The undersigned, late residing in the house of Saint Bride, do you, Father Jerome, the abbot of said house, to know, that finding you were disposed to treat me as a prisoner and a spy, in the sanctuary to which you had received me as a distressed person, I have resolved to use my natural liberty, with which you have no right to interfere, and therefore have withdrawn myself from your abbacy. Moreover, finding that the novice called in your convent sister Ursula (who hath, by monastic rule and discipline, a fair title to return to the world unless she is pleased, after a year’s noviciate, to profess herself sister of your order,) is determined to use such privilege, I joyfully take the opportunity of her company in this her lawful resolution, as being what is in conformity to the law of God, and the precepts of Saint Bride,

which give you no authority to detain any person in your convent by force, who hath not taken upon her irrevocably the vows of the order.

“ To you, Sir John de Walton, and Sir Aymer de Valence, knights of England, commanding the garrison of Douglas Dale, I have only to say, that you have acted and are acting against me under a mystery, the solution of which is comprehended in a secret known only to my faithful minstrel, Bertram of the many Lays, as whose son I have found it convenient to pass myself. But as I cannot at this time prevail upon myself personally to discover a secret which cannot well be unfolded without feelings of shame, I not only give permission to the said Bertram the minstrel, but I charge and command him, that he tell to you the purpose with which I came originally to the Castle of Douglas. When this is discovered, it will only remain to express my feelings towards the two knights, in return for the pain and agony of mind which their violence and threats of further severities have occasioned me.

“ And first, respecting Sir Aymer de Va-

lence, I freely and willingly forgive him for having been involved in a mistake to which I myself led the way, and I shall at all times be happy to meet with him as an acquaintance, and never to think farther of his part in these few days' history, saving as matter of mirth and ridicule.

“ But respecting Sir John de Walton, I must request of him to consider whether his conduct towards me, standing as we at present do towards each other, is such as he himself ought to forget, or I ought to forgive; and I trust he will understand me when I tell him, that all former connexions must henceforth be at an end between him and the supposed

“ AUGUSTINE.”

“ This is madness,” said the abbot, when he had read the letter,—“ very Midsummer madness; not unfrequently an accompaniment of this pestilential disease, and I should do well in requiring of those soldiers who shall first apprehend this youth Augustine, that they reduce his victuals immediately to water and bread,

taking care that the diet do not exceed in measure what is necessary to sustain nature ; nay, I should be warranted by the learned, did I recommend a sufficient intermixture of flagellation with belts, stirrup-leathers, or surcingles, and failing those, with riding-whips, switches, and the like."

"Hush ! my reverend father," said De Valence, "a light begins to break in upon me. John de Walton, if my suspicion be true, would sooner expose his own flesh to be hewn from his bones, than have this Augustine's finger stung by a gnat. Instead of treating this youth as a madman, I, for my own part, will be contented to avow that I myself have been bewitched and fascinated ; and by my honour, if I send out my attendants in quest of the fugitives, it shall be with the strict charge, that, when apprehended, they treat them with all respect, and protect them, if they object to return to this house, to any honourable place of refuge which they may desire."

"I hope," said the abbot, looking strangely confused, "I shall be first heard in behalf of the

church concerning this affair of an abducted nun? You see yourself, Sir Knight, that this scapegrace of a minstrel avouches neither repentance nor contrition at his share in a matter so flagitious."

"You shall be secured an opportunity of being fully heard," replied the knight, "if you shall find at last that you really desire one. Meantime, I must back, without a moment's delay, to inform Sir John de Walton of the turn which affairs have taken. Farewell, reverend father. By my honour, we may wish each other joy that we have escaped from a troublesome charge, which brought as much terror with it as the phantoms of a fearful dream, and is yet found capable of being dispelled by a cure as simple as that of awakening the sleeper. But, by Saint Bride! both churchman and layman are bound to sympathize with the unfortunate Sir John de Walton. I tell thee, father, that if this letter"—touching the missive with his finger—"is to be construed literally, so far as respects him, he is the man most to be pitied betwixt the brink of Solway and the place where we now stand. Suspend thy

curiosity, most worthy churchman, lest there should be more in this matter than I myself see ; so that, while thinking that I have lighted on the true explanation, I may not have to acknowledge that I have been again leading you into error.— Sound to horse there ! Ho !” he called out from the window of the apartment ; “ and let the party I brought hither prepare to scour the woods on their return.”

“ By my faith !” said Father Jerome, “ I am right glad that this young nut-cracker is going to leave me to my own meditation. I hate when a young person pretends to understand whatever passes, while his betters are obliged to confess that it is all a mystery to them. Such an assumption is like that of the conceited fool, sister Ursula, who pretended to read with a single eye a manuscript, which I myself could not find intelligible with the assistance of my spectacles.”

This might not have quite pleased the young knight, nor was it one of those truths which the abbot would have chosen to deliver in his hearing. But the knight had shaken him by the hand, said

adieu, and was already at Hazelside issuing particular orders to little troops of the archers and others, and occasionally chiding Thomas Dickson, who, with a degree of curiosity which the English knight was not very willing to excuse, had been endeavouring to get some account of the occurrences of the night.

“Peace, fellow!” he said, “and mind thine own business, being well assured that the hour will come in which it will require all the attention thou canst give, leaving others to take care of their own affairs.”

“If I am suspected of any thing,” answered Dickson, in a tone rather dogged and surly than otherwise, “methinks it were but fair to let me know what accusation is brought against me. I need not tell you that chivalry prescribes that a knight should not attack an enemy undefined.”

“When you are a knight,” answered Sir Aymer de Valence, “it will be time enough for me to reckon with you upon the points of form due to you by the laws of chivalry. Meanwhile, you had best let me know what share you have had in playing off the martial phantom which

sounded the rebellious slogan of Douglas in the town of that name?"

"I know nothing of what you speak," answered the goodman of Hazelside.

"See then," said the knight, "that you do not engage yourself in the affairs of other people, even if your conscience warrants that you are in no danger from your own."

So saying, he rode off, not waiting any answer. The ideas which filled his head were to the following purpose.

"I know not how it is, but one mist seems no sooner to clear away, than we find ourselves engaged in another. I take it for granted, that the disguised damsel is no other than the goddess of Walton's private idolatry, who has cost him and me so much trouble, and some certain degree of misunderstanding during these last weeks. By my honour! this fair lady is right lavish in the pardon which she has so frankly bestowed upon me, and if she is willing to be less complaisant to Sir John de Walton, why then—And what then?—It surely does not infer that she would receive me into that place in her affections,

from which she has just expelled De Walton? Nor, if she did, could I avail myself of a change in favour of myself, at the expense of my friend and companion in arms. It were a folly even to dream of a thing so improbable. But with respect to the other business, it is worth serious consideration. Yon sexton seems to have kept company with dead bodies, until he is unfit for the society of the living; and as to that Dickson of Hazelside, as they call him, there is no attempt against the English during these endless wars in which that man has not been concerned; had my life depended upon it, I could not have prevented myself from intimating my suspicions of him, let him take it as he lists."

So saying, the knight spurred his horse, and arriving at Douglas Castle without further adventure, demanded, in a tone of greater cordiality than he had of late used, whether he could be admitted to Sir John de Walton, having something of consequence to report to him. He was immediately ushered into an apartment, in which the governor was seated at his solitary breakfast. Considering the terms upon which they had

lately stood, the governor of Douglas Dale was somewhat surprised at the easy familiarity with which De Valence now approached him.

“Some uncommon news,” said Sir John, rather gravely, “have brought me the honour of Sir Aymer de Valence’s company.”

“It is,” answered Sir Aymer, “what seems of high importance to your interest, Sir John de Walton, and therefore I were to blame if I lost a moment in communicating it.”

“I shall be proud to profit by your intelligence,” said Sir John de Walton.

“And I too,” said the young knight, “am loath to lose the credit of having penetrated a mystery which blinded Sir John de Walton. At the same time, I do not wish to be thought capable of jesting with you, which might be the case, were I, from misapprehension, to give a false key to this matter. With your permission, then, we will proceed thus: We go together to the place of Bertram the minstrel’s confinement. I have in my possession a scroll from the young person who was intrusted to the care of the Abbot Jerome; it is written in a de-

licate female hand, and gives authority to the minstrel to declare the purpose which brought them to this vale of Douglas."

"It must be as you say," said Sir John de Walton, "although I can scarce see occasion for adding so much form to a mystery which can be expressed in such small compass."

Accordingly the two knights, a warder leading the way, proceeded to the dungeon to which the minstrel had been removed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE doors of the stronghold being undone, displayed a dungeon such as in those days held victims hopeless of escape, but in which the ingenious knave of modern times would scarcely have deigned to remain many hours. The huge rings by which the fetters were soldered together, and attached to the human body, were, when examined minutely, found to be clenched together by riveting so very thin, that when rubbed with corrosive acid, or patiently ground with a bit of sandstone, the hold of the fetters upon each other might be easily forced asunder, and the purpose of them entirely frustrated. The locks also, large, and apparently very strong, were so coarsely made, that an artist of small ingenuity could easily contrive to get the better of their fastenings upon the same

principle. The daylight found its way to the subterranean dungeon only at noon, and through a passage which was purposely made tortuous, so as to exclude the rays of the sun, while it presented no obstacle to wind or rain. The doctrine that a prisoner was to be esteemed innocent until he should be found guilty by his peers, was not understood in those days of brute force, and he was only accommodated with a lamp or other alleviation of his misery, if his demeanour was quiet, and he appeared disposed to give his jailer no trouble by attempting to make his escape. Such a cell of confinement was that of Bertram, whose moderation of temper and patience had nevertheless procured for him such mitigations of his fate as the warder could grant. He was permitted to carry into his cell the old book, in the perusal of which he found an amusement of his solitude, together with writing materials, and such other helps towards spending his time as were consistent with his abode in the bosom of the rock, and the degree of information with which his minstrel craft had possessed him. He raised his head from the table as the knights en-

tered, while the governor observed to the young knight:—

“As you seem to think yourself possessed of the secret of this prisoner, I leave it to you, Sir Aymer de Valence, to bring it to light in the manner which you shall judge most expedient. If the man or his son have suffered unnecessary hardship, it shall be my duty to make amends—which, I suppose, can be no very important matter.”

Bertram looked up, and fixed his eyes full upon the governor, but read nothing in his looks which indicated his being better acquainted than before with the secret of his imprisonment. Yet, upon turning his eye towards Sir Aymer, his countenance evidently lighted up, and the glance which passed between them was one of intelligence.

“You have my secret then,” said he, “and you know who it is that passes under the name of Augustine?”

Sir Aymer exchanged with him a look of acquiescence; while the eyes of the governor,

glancing wildly from the prisoner to the knight of Valence, exclaimed,—

“ Sir Aymer de Valence, as you are belted knight and Christian man, as you have honour to preserve on earth, and a soul to rescue after death, I charge you to tell me the meaning of this mystery ! It may be that you conceive, with truth, that you have subject of complaint against me ;—If so, I will satisfy you as a knight may.”

The minstrel spoke at the same moment.

“ I charge this knight,” he said, “ by his vow of chivalry, that he do not divulge any secret belonging to a person of honour and of character, unless he has positive assurance that it is done entirely by that person’s own consent.”

“ Let this note remove your scruples,” said Sir Aymer, putting the scroll into the hands of the minstrel ; “ and for you, Sir John de Walton, far from retaining the least feeling of any misunderstanding which may have existed between us, I am disposed entirely to bury it in forgetfulness, as having arisen out of a series of mistakes which no mortal could have compre-

hended. And do not be offended, my dear Sir John, when I protest, on my knightly faith, that I pity the pain which I think this scroll is likely to give you, and that if my utmost efforts can be of the least service to you in unravelling this tangled skein, I will contribute them with as much earnestness as ever I did aught in my life. This faithful minstrel will now see that he can have no difficulty in yielding up a secret, which I doubt not, but for the writing I have just put into his hands, he would have continued to keep with unshaken fidelity."

Sir Aymer now placed in De Walton's hand a note, in which he had, ere he left Saint Bride's convent, signified his own interpretation of the mystery ; and the governor had scarcely read the name it contained, before the same name was pronounced aloud by Bertram, who, at the same moment, handed to the governor the scroll which he had received from the knight of Valence.

The white plume which floated over the knight's cap of maintenance, which was worn as a headpiece within doors, was not more pale in complexion than was the knight himself at

the unexpected and surprising information, that the lady who was, in chivalrous phrase, empress of his thoughts, and commander of his actions, and to whom, even in less fantastic times, he must have owed the deepest gratitude for the generous election which she had made in his favour, was the same person whom he had threatened with personal violence, and subjected to hardships and affronts which he would not willingly have bestowed even upon the meanest of her sex.

Yet Sir John de Walton seemed at first scarcely to comprehend the numerous ill consequences which might probably follow this unhappy complication of mistakes. He took the paper from the minstrel's hand, and while his eye, assisted by the lamp, wandered over the characters without apparently their conveying any distinct impression to his understanding, De Valence even became alarmed that he was about to lose his faculties.

“ For Heaven's sake, sir,” he said, “ be a man, and support with manly steadiness these unexpected occurrences—I would fain think they

will reach to nothing else—which the wit of man could not have prevented. This fair lady, I would fain hope, cannot be much hurt or deeply offended by a train of circumstances, the natural consequence of your anxiety to discharge perfectly a duty upon which must depend the accomplishment of all the hopes she had permitted you to entertain. In God's name, rouse up, sir; let it not be said, that an apprehended frown of a fair lady hath damped to such a degree the courage of the boldest knight in England; be what men have called you, 'Walton the Unwavering;' in Heaven's name, let us at least see that the lady is indeed offended, before we conclude that she is irreconcilably so. To whose fault are we to ascribe the source of all these errors? Surely, with all due respect, to the caprice of the lady herself, which has engendered such a nest of mistakes. Think of it as a man, and as a soldier. Suppose that you yourself, or I, desirous of proving the fidelity of our sentinels, or for any other reason, good or bad, attempted to enter this Dangerous Castle of Douglas without giving the password to the warders,

would we be entitled to blame those upon duty, if, not knowing our persons, they manfully refused us entrance, made us prisoners, and mishandled us while resisting our attempt, in terms of the orders which we ourselves had imposed upon them? What is there that makes a difference between such a sentinel and yourself, John de Walton, in this curious affair, which, by Heaven! would rather form a gay subject for the minstrelsy of this excellent bard, than the theme of a tragic lay? Come! look not thus, Sir John de Walton; be angry, if you will, with the lady who has committed such a piece of folly, or with me who have rode up and down nearly all night on a fool's errand, and spoiled my best horse, in absolute uncertainty how I shall get another till my uncle of Pembroke and I shall be reconciled; or, lastly, if you desire to be totally absurd in your wrath, direct it against this worthy minstrel on account of his rare fidelity, and punish him for that for which he better deserves a chain of gold. Let passion out, if you will; but chase this desponding gloom from the brow of a man and a belted knight."

Sir John de Walton made an effort to speak, and succeeded with some difficulty.

“Aymer de Valence,” he said, “in irritating a madman you do but sport with your own life;” and then remained silent.

“I am glad you can say so much,” replied his friend; “for I was not jesting when I said I would rather that you were at variance with me, than that you laid the whole blame on yourself. It would be courteous, I think, to set this minstrel instantly at liberty. Meantime, for his lady’s sake, I will entreat him, in all honour, to be our guest till the Lady Augusta de Berkely shall do us the same honour, and to assist us in our search after her place of retirement.—Good minstrel,” he continued, “you hear what I say, and you will not, I suppose, be surprised, that, in all honour and kind usage, you find yourself detained for a short space in this Castle of Douglas?”

“You seem, Sir Knight,” replied the minstrel, “not so much to keep your eye upon the right of doing what you should, as to possess the might of doing what you would. I must necessarily be

guided by your advice, since you have the power to make it a command."

"And I trust," continued De Valence, "that when your mistress and you again meet, we shall have the benefit of your intercession for any thing which we may have done to displeasure her, considering that the purpose of our action was exactly the reverse?"

"Let me," said Sir John de Walton, "say a single word. I will offer thee a chain of gold, heavy enough to bear down the weight of these shackles, as a sign of regret for having condemned thee to suffer so many indignities."

"Enough said, Sir John," said De Valence; "let us promise no more till this good minstrel shall see some sign of performance. Follow me this way, and I will tell thee in private of other tidings, which it is important that you should know."

So saying, he withdrew De Walton from the dungeon, and sending for the old knight, Sir Philip de Montenay, already mentioned, who acted as seneschal of the castle, he commanded that the minstrel should be enlarged from the

dungeon, well looked to in other respects, yet prohibited, though with every mark of civility, from leaving the castle without a trusty attendant.

“And now, Sir John de Walton,” he said, “methinks you are a little churlish in not ordering me some breakfast, after I have been all night engaged in your affairs; and a cup of muscadel would, I think, be no bad induction to a full consideration of this perplexed matter.”

“Thou knowest,” answered De Walton, “that thou mayst call for what thou wilt, provided always thou tellest me, without loss of time, what else thou knowest respecting the will of the lady, against whom we have all sinned so grievously—and I, alas, beyond hope of forgiveness!”

“Trust me, I hope,” said the Knight of Valence, “the good lady bears me no malice, as indeed she has expressly renounced any ill-will against me. The words, you see, are as plain as you yourself may read—‘The lady pardons poor Aymer de Valence, and willingly, for having been involved in a mistake, to which she herself led the way; she herself will at all times

be happy to meet with him as an acquaintance, and never to think farther of these few days' history, except as matter of mirth and ridicule.' So it is expressly written and set down."

"Yes," replied Sir John de Walton, "but see you not that her offending lover is expressly excluded from the amnesty granted to the lesser offender? Mark you not the concluding paragraph?" He took the scroll with a trembling hand, and read with a discomposed voice its closing words. "It is even so; 'All former connexion must henceforth be at an end between him and the supposed Augustine.' Explain to me how the reading of these words is reconcilable to any thing but their plain sense of condemnation and forfeiture of contract, implying destruction of the hopes of Sir John de Walton?"

"You are somewhat an older man than I, Sir Knight," answered De Valence, "and, I will grant, by far the wiser and more experienced; yet I will uphold that there is no adopting the interpretation which you seem to have affixed in your mind to this letter, without supposing the preliminary, that the fair writer was distracted

in her understanding,—nay, never start, look wildly, or lay your hand on your sword, I do not affirm this is the case. I say again, that no woman in her senses would have pardoned a common acquaintance, for his behaving to her with unintentional disrespect and unkindness, during the currency of a certain masquerade, and, at the same time, sternly and irrevocably broke off with the lover to whom her troth was plighted, although his error in joining in the offence was neither grosser nor more protracted than that of the person indifferent to her love.”

“Do not blaspheme,” said Sir John de Walton; “and forgive me, if, in justice to truth and to the angel whom I fear I have forfeited for ever, I point out to you the difference which a maiden of dignity and of feeling must make between an offence towards her, committed by an ordinary acquaintance, and one of precisely the same kind, offered by a person who is bound by the most undeserved preference, by the most generous benefits, and by every thing which can bind human feeling, to think and reflect ere he

becomes an actor in any case in which it is possible for her to be concerned."

"Now, by mine honour," said Aymer de Valence, "I am glad to hear thee make some attempt at reason, although it is but an unreasonable kind of reason too, since its object is to destroy thine own hopes, and argue away thine own chance of happiness; but if I have, in the progress of this affair, borne me sometimes towards thee, as to give not only the governor, but even the friend, some cause of displeasure, I will make it up to thee now, John de Walton, by trying to convince thee in spite of thine own perverse logic. But here comes the muscadel and the breakfast; wilt thou take some refreshment?—or shall we go on without the spirit of muscadel?"

"For Heaven's sake," replied De Walton, "do as thou wilt, so thou make me clear of thy well intended babble."

"Nay, thou shalt not brawl me out of my powers of argument," said de Valence, laughing, and helping himself to a brimming cup of wine; "if thou acknowledgest thyself conquered, I am

contented to give the victory to the inspiring strength of the jovial liquor."

"Do as thou listest," said De Walton, "but make an end of an argument which thou canst not comprehend."

"I deny thy charge," answered the younger knight, wiping his lips, after having finished his draught; "and listen, Walton the Warlike, to a chapter in the history of women, in which thou art more unskilled than I would wish thee to be. Thou canst not deny that, be it right or wrong, thy Lady Augusta hath ventured more forward with you than is usual upon the sea of affection; she boldly made thee her choice, while thou wert as yet known to her only as a flower of English chivalry,—faith, and I respect her for her frankness—but it was a choice, which the more cold of her own sex might perhaps claim occasion to term rash and precipitate.—Nay, be not, I pray thee, offended—I am far from thinking or saying so; on the contrary, I will uphold with my lance, her selection of John de Walton against the minions of a court, to be a wise and generous choice, and her own behaviour as alike candid

and noble. But she herself is not unlikely to dread unjust misconstruction; a fear of which may not improbably induce her, upon any occasion, to seize some opportunity of showing an unwonted and unusual rigour towards her lover, in order to balance her having extended towards him, in the beginning of their intercourse, somewhat of an unusual degree of frank encouragement. Nay, it might be easy for her lover so far to take part against himself, by arguing as thou dost when out of thy senses, as to make it difficult for her to withdraw from an argument which he himself was foolish enough to strengthen; and thus, like a maiden too soon taken at her first nay-say, she shall perhaps be allowed no opportunity of bearing herself according to her real feelings, or retracting a sentence issued with consent of the party whose hopes it destroys."

"I have heard thee, De Valence," answered the governor of Douglas Dale; "nor is it difficult for me to admit, that these thy lessons may serve as a chart to many a female heart, but not to that of Augusta de Berkely. By my life, I say I would much sooner be deprived of the

merit of those few deeds of chivalry which thou sayest have procured for me such enviable distinction, than I would act upon them with the insolence, as if I said that my place in the lady's bosom was too firmly fixed to be shaken even by the success of a worthier man, or by my own gross failure, in respect to the object of my attachment. No, herself alone shall have power to persuade me that even goodness equal to that of an interceding saint, will restore me to the place in her affections which I have most unworthily forfeited, by a stupidity only to be compared to that of brutes."

"If you are so minded," said Aymer de Valence, "I have only one word more—forgive me if I speak it peremptorily—the lady, as you say, and say truly, must be the final arbitress in this question. My arguments do not extend to insisting that you should claim her hand, whether she herself will or no; but to learn her determination, it is necessary that you should find out where she is, of which I am unfortunately not able to inform you."

"How! what mean you!" exclaimed the

governor, who now only began to comprehend the extent of his misfortune; "whither hath she fled? or with whom?"

"She is fled, for what I know," said De Valence, "in search of a more enterprising lover than one who is so willing to interpret every air of frost as a killing blight to his hopes; perhaps she seeks the Black Douglas, or some such hero of the Thistle, to reward with her lands, and lordships, and beauty, those virtues of enterprise and courage of which John de Walton was at one time thought possessed. But, seriously, events are passing around us of strange import. I saw enough last night, on my way to Saint Bride's, to make me suspicious of every one. I sent to you as a prisoner the old sexton of the church of Douglas. I found him contumacious as to some enquiries which I thought it proper to prosecute; but of this more at another time. The escape of this lady adds greatly to the difficulties which encircle this devoted castle."

"Aymer de Valence," replied De Walton, in a solemn and animated tone, "Douglas Castle

shall be defended, as we have hitherto been able, with the aid of Heaven, to spread from its battlements the broad banner of St George. Come of me what list during my life, I will die the faithful lover of Augusta de Berkely, even although I no longer live as her chosen knight. There are cloisters and hermitages"——

"Ay, marry are there," replied Sir Aymer; "and girdles of hemp, moreover, and beads of oak; but all these we omit in our reckonings, till we discover where the Lady Augusta is, and what she purposes to do in this matter."

"You say well," replied De Walton; "let us hold counsel together by what means we shall, if possible, discover the lady's too hasty retreat, by which she has done me great wrong; I mean if she supposed her commands would not have been fully obeyed, had she honoured with them the governor of Douglas Dale, or any who are under his command."

"Now," replied Valence, "you again speak like a true son of chivalry. With your permission, I would summon this minstrel to our

presence. His fidelity to his mistress has been remarkable; and, as matters stand now, we must take instant measures for tracing the place of her retreat."

CHAPTER VII.

The way is long, my children, long and rough—
The moors are dreary, and the woods are dark;
But he that creeps from cradle on to grave,
Unskilled save in the velvet course of fortune,
Hath missed the discipline of noble hearts.

Old Play.

It was yet early in the day, when, after the Governor and De Valence had again summoned Bertram to their councils, the garrison of Douglas was mustered, and a number of small parties, in addition to those already dispatched by De Valence from Hazelside, were sent out to scour the woods in pursuit of the fugitives, with strict injunctions to treat them, if overtaken, with the utmost respect, and to obey their commands, keeping an eye, however, on the place where they might take refuge. To facilitate this result, some who were men of dis-

cretion were intrusted with the secret who the supposed pilgrim and the fugitive nun really were. The whole ground, whether forest or moorland, within many miles of Douglas Castle, was covered and traversed by parties, whose anxiety to detect the fugitives was equal to the reward for their safe recovery, liberally offered by De Walton and De Valence. They spared not, meantime, to make such enquiries in all directions as might bring to light any machinations of the Scottish insurgents which might be on foot in these wild districts, of which, as we have said before, De Valence, in particular, entertained strong suspicions. Their instructions were, in case of finding such, to proceed against the persons engaged, by arrest and otherwise, in the most rigorous manner, such as had been commanded by De Walton himself at the time when the Black Douglas and his accomplices had been the principal objects of his wakeful suspicions. These various detachments had greatly reduced the strength of the garrison; yet, although numerous, alert, and dispatched in every direction, they had not the fortune either

to fall on the trace of the Lady of Berkely, or to encounter any party whatever of the insurgent Scottish.

Meantime our fugitives had, as we have seen, set out from the convent of Saint Bride under the guidance of a cavalier, of whom the Lady Augusta knew nothing save that he was to guide their steps in a direction where they would not be exposed to the risk of being overtaken. At length Margaret de Hautlieu herself spoke upon the subject.

“You have made no enquiry,” she said, “Lady Augusta, whither you are travelling, or under whose charge, although methinks it should much concern you to know.”

“Is it not enough for me to be aware,” answered Lady Augusta, “that I am travelling, kind sister, under the protection of one to whom you yourself trust as to a friend; and why need I be anxious for any farther assurance of my safety?”

“Simply,” said Margaret de Hautlieu, “because the persons with whom, from national as well as personal circumstances, I stand connect-

ed, are perhaps not exactly the protectors to whom you, lady, can with such perfect safety intrust yourself."

"In what sense," said the Lady Augusta, "do you use these words?"

"Because," replied Margaret de Hautlieu, "the Bruce, the Douglas, Malcolm Fleming, and others of that party, although they are incapable of abusing such an advantage to any dishonourable purpose, might nevertheless, under a strong temptation, consider you as an hostage thrown into their hands by Providence, through whom they might meditate the possibility of gaining some benefit to their dispersed and dispirited party."

"They might make me," answered the Lady Augusta, "the subject of such a treaty, when I was dead, but, believe me, never while I drew vital breath. Believe me also that, with whatever pain, shame, or agony, I would again deliver myself up to the power of De Walton, yes, I would rather put myself in his hands—What do I say? *his*!—I would rather surrender myself to the meanest archer of my native country, than

combine with its foes to work mischief to merry England—my own England—that country which is the envy of every other country, and the pride of all who can term themselves her natives !”

“ I thought that your choice might prove so,” said Lady Margaret; “and since you have honoured me with your confidence, gladly would I provide for your liberty by placing you as nearly in the situation which you yourself desire, as my poor means have the power of accomplishing. In half an hour we shall be in danger of being taken by the English parties, which will be instantly dispersed in every direction in quest of us. Now take notice, lady, I know a place in which I can take refuge with my friends and countrymen, those gallant Scots, who have never even in this dishonoured age bent the knee to Baal. For their honour, their nicety of honour, I could in other days have answered with my own ; but of late, I am bound to tell you, they have been put to those trials by which the most generous affections may be soured, and driven to a species of frenzy, the more wild that it is founded originally on the noblest feelings. A person who feels himself

deprived of his natural birthright, denounced, exposed to confiscation and death, because he avouches the rights of his king, the cause of his country, ceases on his part to be nice or precise in estimating the degree of retaliation which it is lawful for him to exercise in the requital of such injuries; and, believe me, bitterly should I lament having guided you into a situation which you might consider afflicting or degrading."

"In a word, then," said the English lady, "what is it you apprehend I am like to suffer at the hands of your friends, whom I must be excused for terming rebels?"

"If," said the sister Ursula, "*your* friends, whom I should term oppressors and tyrants, take our land and our lives, seize our castles and confiscate our property, you must confess, that the rough laws of war indulge *mine* with the privilege of retaliation. There can be no fear, that such men, under any circumstances, would ever exercise cruelty or insult upon a lady of your rank; but it is another thing to calculate that they will abstain from such means of extorting advantage from your captivity as are common in war-

fare. You would not, I think, wish to be delivered up to the English, on consideration of Sir John de Walton surrendering the Castle of Douglas to its natural lord; yet, were you in the hands of the Bruce or Douglas, although I can answer for your being treated with all the respect which they have the means of showing, yet I own, their putting you at such a ransom might be by no means unlikely."

"I would sooner die," said the Lady Berkely, "than have my name mixed up in a treaty so disgraceful; and De Walton's reply to it would, I am certain, be to strike the head from the messenger, and throw it from the highest tower of Douglas Castle."

"Where then, lady, would you now go," said sister Ursula, "were the choice in your power?"

"To my own castle," answered Lady Augusta, "where, if necessary, I could be defended even against the king himself, until I could place at least my person under the protection of the Church."

"In that case," replied Margaret de Hautlieu,

“ my power of rendering you assistance is only precarious, yet it comprehends a choice which I will willingly submit to your decision, notwithstanding I thereby subject the secrets of my friends to some risk of being discovered and frustrated. But the confidence which you have placed in me, imposes on me the necessity of committing to you a like trust. It rests with you, whether you will proceed with me to the secret rendezvous of the Douglas and his friends, which I may be blamed for making known, and there take your chance of the reception which you may encounter, since I cannot warrant you of any thing save honourable treatment, so far as your person is concerned ; or, if you should think this too hazardous, make the best of your way at once for the Border ; in which last case I will proceed as far as I can with you towards the English line, and then leave you to pursue your journey, and to obtain a guard and a conductor among your own countrymen. Meantime, it will be well for me if I escape being taken, since the abbot would not shrink at inflicting upon me the death due to an apostate nun.”

“Such cruelty, my sister, could hardly be inflicted upon one who had never taken the religious vows, and who still, according to the laws of the church, had a right to make a choice between the world and the veil.”

“Such choice as they gave their gallant victims,” said Lady Margaret, “who have fallen into English hands during these merciless wars,—such choice as they gave to Wallace, the Champion of Scotland,—such as they gave to Hay, the gentle and the free,—to Sommerville, the flower of chivalry,—and to Athol, the blood relation of King Edward himself—all of whom were as much traitors, under which name they were executed, as Margaret de Hautlieu is an apostate nun, and subject to the rule of the cloister.”

She spoke with some eagerness, for she felt as if the English lady imputed to her more coldness than she was, in such doubtful circumstances, conscious of manifesting.

“And after all,” she proceeded, “you, Lady Augusta de Berkely, what do you venture, if you run the risk of falling into the hands of

your lover? What dreadful risk do you incur? You need not, methinks, fear being immured between four walls, with a basket of bread and a cruise of water, which, were I seized, would be the only support allowed to me for the short space that my life would be prolonged. Nay, even were you to be betrayed to the rebel Scots, as you call them, a captivity among the hills, sweetened by the hope of deliverance, and rendered tolerable by all the alleviations which the circumstances of your captors allowed them the means of supplying, were not, I think, a lot so very hard to endure."

"Nevertheless," answered the Lady of Berkeley, "frightful enough it must have appeared to me, since, to fly from such, I threw myself upon your guidance."

"And whatever you think or suspect," answered the novice, "I am as true to you as ever was one maiden to another; and as sure as ever sister Ursula was true to her vows, although they were never completed, so will I be faithful to your secret, even at the risk of betraying my own."

“Hearken, lady!” she said, suddenly pausing;
“do you hear that?”

The sound to which she alluded was the same imitation of the cry of an owlet, which the lady had before heard under the walls of the Convent.

“These sounds,” said Margaret de Hautlieu, “announce that one is near, more able than I am to direct us in this matter. I must go forward and speak with him; and this man, our guide, will remain by you for a little space; nor, when he quits your bridle, need you wait for any other signal, but ride forward on the woodland path, and obey the advice and directions which will be given you.”

“Stay! stay! sister Ursula!” cried the Lady de Berkely—“abandon me not in this moment of uncertainty and distress!”

“It must be, for the sake of both,” returned Margaret de Hautlieu. “I also am in uncertainty—I also am in distress—and patience and obedience are the only virtues which can save us both.”

So saying, she struck her horse with the riding rod, and moving briskly forward, disap-

peared among the boughs of a tangled thicket. The Lady of Berkely would have followed her companion, but the cavalier who attended them laid a strong hand upon the bridle of her palfrey, with a look which implied that he would not permit her to proceed in that direction. Terrified, therefore, though she could not exactly state a reason why, the Lady of Berkely remained with her eyes fixed upon the thicket, instinctively, as it were, expecting to see a band of English archers, or rugged Scottish insurgents, issue from its tangled skirts, and doubtful which she should have most considered as the objects of her terror. In the distress of her uncertainty, she again attempted to move forward, but the stern check which her attendant again bestowed upon her bridle, proved sufficiently that in restraining her wishes, the stranger was not likely to spare the strength which he certainly possessed. At length, after some ten minutes had elapsed, the cavalier withdrew his hand from her bridle, and pointing with his lance towards the thicket, through which there winded a narrow, scarce visible path, seemed to

intimate to the lady that her road lay in that direction, and that he would no longer prevent her following it.

“Do you not go with me?” said the lady, who having been accustomed to this man’s company since they left the convent, had by degrees come to look upon him as a sort of protector. He, however, gravely shook his head, as if to excuse complying with a request, which it was not in his power to grant; and turning his steed in a different direction, retired at a pace which soon carried him from her sight. She had then no alternative but to take the path of the thicket, which had been followed by Margaret de Hautlieu, nor did she pursue it long before coming in sight of a singular spectacle.

The trees grew wider as the lady advanced, and when she entered the thicket, she perceived, that though hedged in as it were by an enclosure of copsewood, it was in the interior altogether occupied by a few of the magnificent trees, such as seemed to have been the ancestors of the forest, and which, though few in number, were sufficient to overshadow all the unoccupied

ground, by the great extent of their complicated branches. Beneath one of these lay stretched something of a grey colour, which, as it drew itself together, exhibited the figure of a man sheathed in armour, but strangely accoutred, and in a manner so bizarre, as to indicate some of the wild fancies peculiar to the knights of that period. His armour was ingeniously painted, so as to represent a skeleton; the ribs being constituted by the corslet and its back-piece. The shield represented an owl with its wings spread, a device which was repeated upon the helmet, which appeared to be completely covered by an image of the same bird of ill omen. But that which was particularly calculated to excite surprise in the spectator, was the great height and thinness of the figure, which, as it arose from the ground, and placed itself in an erect posture, seemed rather to resemble an apparition in the act of extricating itself from the grave, than that of an ordinary man rising upon his feet. The horse, too, upon which the lady rode, started back, and snorted, either at the sudden change of posture of this ghastly specimen of chivalry, or disagreeably

affected by some odour which accompanied his presence. The lady herself manifested some alarm, for although she did not utterly believe she was in the presence of a supernatural being, yet, among all the strange half-frantic disguises of chivalry, this was assuredly the most uncouth which she had ever seen; and considering how often the knights of the period pushed their dreamy fancies to the borders of insanity, it seemed at best no very safe adventure to meet one accoutred in the emblems of the King of Terrors himself, alone, and in the midst of a wild forest. Be the knight's character and purposes what they might, she resolved, however, to accost him in the language and manner observed in romances upon such occasions, in the hope even that if he were a madman, he might prove a peaceable one, and accessible to civility.

“Sir Knight,” she said, in as firm a tone as she could assume, “right sorry am I, if, by my hasty approach, I have disturbed your solitary meditations. My horse, sensible I think of the presence of yours, brought me hither, without my being aware whom or what I was to encounter.”

“ I am one,” answered the stranger, in a solemn tone, “ whom few men seek to meet, till the time comes that they can avoid me no longer.”

“ You speak, Sir Knight,” replied the Lady de Berkely, “ according to the dismal character of which it has pleased you to assume the distinction. May I appeal to one whose exterior is so formidable, for the purpose of requesting some directions to guide me through this wild wood; as, for instance, what is the name of the nearest castle, town, or hostelry, and by what course I am best likely to reach such?”

“ It is a singular audacity,” answered the Knight of the Tomb, “ that would enter into conversation with him who is termed the Inexorable, the Unsparing, and the Pitiless, whom even the most miserable forbears to call to his assistance, lest his prayers should be too soon answered.”

“ Sir Knight,” replied the Lady Augusta, “ the character which you have assumed, unquestionably for good reasons, dictates to you a

peculiar course of speech ; but although your part is a sad one, it does not, I should suppose, render it necessary for you to refuse those acts of civility to which you must have bound yourself in taking the high vows of chivalry."

" If you will trust to my guidance," replied the ghastly figure, " there is only one condition upon which I can grant you the information which you require ; and that is, that you follow my footsteps without any questions asked as to the tendency of our journey."

" I suppose I must submit to your conditions," she answered, " if you are indeed pleased to take upon yourself the task of being my guide. In my heart I conceive you to be one of the unhappy gentlemen of Scotland, who are now in arms, as they say, for the defence of their liberties. A rash undertaking has brought me within the sphere of your influence, and now the only favour I have to request of you, against whom I never did, nor planned any evil, is the guidance which your knowledge of the country permits you easily to afford me in my way to the

frontiers of England. Believe that what I may see of your haunts or of your practices, shall be to me things invisible, as if they were actually concealed by the sepulchre itself of the king, of whom it has pleased you to assume the attributes; and if a sum of money, enough to be the ransom of a wealthy earl, will purchase such a favour at need, such a ransom will be frankly paid, and with as much fidelity as ever it was rendered by a prisoner to the knight by whom he was taken. Do not reject me, princely Bruce—noble Douglas—if indeed it is to either of these that I address myself in this my last extremity—men speak of both as fearful enemies, but generous knights and faithful friends. Let me entreat you to remember how much you would wish your own friends and connexions to meet with compassion, under similar circumstances, at the hands of the knights of England.”

“ And have they done so?” replied the Knight, in a voice more gloomy than before; “ or do you act wisely, while imploring the protection of one whom you believe to be a true Scottish knight, for no other reason than the

extreme and extravagant misery of his appearance;—is it, I say, well or wise to remind him of the mode in which the lords of England have treated the lovely maidens and the high-born dames of Scotland? Have not their prison cages been suspended from the battlements of castles, that their captivity might be kept in view of every base burgher who should desire to look upon the miseries of the noblest peeresses, yea, even the Queen of Scotland? * Is this a recollection which can inspire a Scottish knight with compassion towards an English lady? or is it a thought which can do aught but swell the deeply sworn hatred of Edward Plantagenet, the author of these evils, that boils in every drop of Scottish blood which still feels the throb of life? No;—it is all you can expect, if, cold and pitiless as the sepulchre I represent, I leave you unassisted in the helpless condition in which you describe yourself to be.”

“ You will not be so inhuman,” replied the

* The Queen of Robert the Bruce, and the Countess of Buchan, by whom, as one of Macduff's descent, he was crowned at Scone, were secured in the manner described.

lady ; “ in doing so, you must surrender every right to honest fame, which you have won either by sword or lance. You must surrender every pretence to that justice which affects the merit of supporting the weak against the strong. You must make it your principle to avenge the wrongs and tyranny of Edward Plantagenet upon the dames and damosels of England, who have neither access to his councils, nor perhaps give him their approbation in his wars against Scotland.”

“ It would not then,” said the Knight of the Sepulchre, “ induce you to depart from your request, should I tell you the evils to which you would subject yourself should we fall into the hands of the English troops, and should they find you under such ill-omened protection as my own ?”

“ Be assured,” said the lady, “ the consideration of such an event does not in the least shake my resolution or desire of confiding in your protection. You may probably know who I am, and may judge how far even Edward would hold

himself entitled to extend punishment towards me."

"How am I to know you," replied the ghastly cavalier, "or your circumstances? They must be extraordinary indeed, if they could form a check, either of justice or humanity, upon the revengeful feelings of Edward. All who know him are well assured that it is no ordinary motive that will induce him to depart from the indulgence of his evil temper. But be it as it may, you, lady, if a lady you be, throw yourself as a burden upon me, and I must discharge myself of my trust as I best may; for this purpose you must be guided implicitly by my directions, which will be given after the fashion of those of the spiritual world, being intimations, rather than detailed instructions, for your conduct, and expressed rather by commands than by any reason or argument. In this way it is possible that I may be of service to you; in any other case, it is most likely that I may fail you at need, and melt from your side like a phantom which dreads the approach of day."

“ You cannot be so cruel !” answered the lady. “ A gentleman, a knight, and a nobleman—and I persuade myself I speak to all—hath duties which he cannot abandon.”

“ He has, I grant it, and they are most sacred to me,” answered the Spectral Knight; “ but I have also duties whose obligations are doubly binding, and to which I must sacrifice those which would otherwise lead me to devote myself to your rescue. The only question is, whether you feel inclined to accept my protection on the limited terms on which alone I can extend it, or whether you deem it better that each go their own way, and limit themselves to their own resources, and trust the rest to Providence ?”

“ Alas !” replied the lady, “ beset and hard pressed as I am, to ask me to form a resolution for myself, is like calling on a wretch, in the act of falling from a precipice, to form a calm judgment by what twig he may best gain the chance of breaking his fall. His answer must necessarily be, that he will cling to that which he can easiest lay hold of, and trust the rest to Provi-

dence. I accept therefore your offer of protection, in the modified way you are pleased to limit it, and I put my faith in Heaven and in you. To aid me effectually, however, you must know my name and my circumstances."

"All these," answered the Knight of the Sepulchre, "have already been told me, by your late companion; for deem not, young lady, that either beauty, rank, extended domains, unlimited wealth, or the highest accomplishments, can weigh any thing in the consideration of him who wears the trappings of the tomb, and whose affections and desires are long buried in the charnel-house."

"May your faith," said the Lady Augusta de Berkely, "be as steady as your words appear severe, and I submit to your guidance, without the least doubt or fear that it will prove otherwise than as I venture to hope."

CHAPTER VIII.

LIKE the dog following its master, when engaged in training him to the sport in which he desires he should excel, the Lady Augusta felt herself occasionally treated with a severity calculated to impress upon her the most implicit obedience and attention to the Knight of the Tomb, in whom she had speedily persuaded herself she saw a principal man among the retainers of Douglas, if not James of Douglas himself. Still, however, the ideas which the lady had formed of the redoubted Douglas, were those of a knight highly accomplished in the duties of chivalry, devoted in particular to the service of the fair sex, and altogether unlike the personage with whom she found herself so strangely united,

or rather for the present enthralled to. Nevertheless, when, as if to abridge farther communication, he turned short into one of the mazes of the wood, and seemed to adopt a pace, which, from the nature of the ground, the horse on which the Lady Augusta was mounted had difficulty to keep up with, she followed him with the alarm and speed of the young spaniel, which, from fear rather than fondness, endeavours to keep up with the track of its severe master. The simile, it is true, is not a very polite one, nor entirely becoming an age, when women were worshipped with a certain degree of devotion; but such circumstances as the present were also rare, and the Lady Augusta de Berkely could not but persuade herself that the terrible champion, whose name had been so long the theme of her anxiety, and the terror indeed of the whole country, might be able some way or other, to accomplish her deliverance. She, therefore, exerted herself to the utmost so as to keep pace with the phantom-like apparition, and followed the knight, as the evening shadow keeps watch upon the belated rustic.

As the lady obviously suffered under the degree of exertion necessary to keep her palfrey from stumbling in these steep and broken paths, the Knight of the Tomb slackened his pace, looked anxiously around him, and muttered apparently to himself, though probably intended for his companion's ear, "There is no occasion for so much haste."

He proceeded at a slower rate until they seemed to be on the brink of a ravine, being one of many irregularities on the surface of the ground, effected by the sudden torrents peculiar to that country, and which, winding among the trees and copsewood, formed, as it were, a net of places of concealment, opening into each other, so that there was perhaps no place in the world so fit for the purpose of ambuscade. The spot where the borderer Turnbull had made his escape at the hunting-match, was one specimen of this broken country, and perhaps connected itself with the various thickets and passes through which the knight and pilgrim occasionally seemed to take their way, though that ravine was at a considerable distance from their present route.

Meanwhile the knight led the way, as if rather with the purpose of bewildering the Lady Augusta amidst these interminable woods, than following any exact or fixed path. Here they ascended, and anon appeared to descend in the same direction, finding only boundless wildernesses, and varied combinations of tangled woodland scenery. Such part of the country as seemed arable, the knight appeared carefully to avoid; yet he could not direct his course with so much certainty but that he occasionally crossed the path of inhabitants and cultivators, who showed a consciousness of so singular a presence, but never, as the lady observed, evinced any symptom of recognition. The inference was obvious, that the spectre knight was known in the country, and that he possessed adherents or accomplices there, who were at least so far his friends, as to avoid giving any alarm, which might be the means of his discovery. The well imitated cry of the night-owl, too frequent a guest in the wilderness that its call should be a subject of surprise, seemed to be a signal generally understood among them; for it was heard

in different parts of the wood, and the Lady Augusta, experienced in such journeys by her former travels under the guidance of the minstrel Bertram, was led to observe, that on hearing such wild notes, her guide changed the direction of his course, and betook himself to paths which led through deeper wilds, and more impenetrable thickets. This happened so often, that a new alarm came upon the unfortunate pilgrim, which suggested other motives of terror. Was she not the confidant, and almost the tool of some artful design, laid with a view to an extensive operation, which was destined to terminate, as the efforts of Douglas had before done, in the surprise of his hereditary castle, the massacre of the English garrison—and finally in the dishonour and death of that Sir John de Walton, upon whose fate she had long believed, or taught herself to believe, that her own was dependant? It no sooner flashed across the mind of the Lady Augusta that she was engaged in some such conspiracy with a Scottish insurgent, than she shuddered at the consequences of the dark

transactions in which she had now become involved, and which appeared to have a tendency so very different from what she had at first apprehended.

The hours of the morning of this remarkable day, being that of Palm Sunday, were thus drawn out in wandering from place to place; while the Lady de Berkely occasionally interposed by petitions for liberty, which she endeavoured to express in the most moving and pathetic manner, and by offers of wealth and treasure, to which no answer whatever was returned by her strange guide.

At length, as if worn out by his captive's importunity, the knight, coming close up to the bridle rein of the Lady Augusta, said in a solemn tone—

“ I am, as you may well believe, none of those knights who roam through wood and wild seeking adventures, by which I may obtain grace in the eyes of a fair lady : Yet will I to a certain degree grant the request which thou dost solicit so anxiously, and the arbitra-

tion of thy fate shall depend upon the pleasure of him to whose will thou hast expressed thyself ready to submit thine own. I will on our arrival at the place of our destination, which is now at hand, write to Sir John de Walton, and send my letter, together with thy fair self, by a special messenger. He will, no doubt, speedily attend our summons, and thou shalt thyself be satisfied that even he who has as yet appeared deaf to entreaty, and insensible to earthly affections, has still some sympathy for beauty and for virtue. I will put the choice of safety, and thy future happiness, into thine own hands, and those of the man whom thou hast chosen; and thou mayst select which thou wilt betwixt those and misery."

While he thus spoke, one of those ravines or clefts in the earth seemed to yawn before them, and entering it at the upper end, the spectre knight, with an attention which he had not yet shown, guided the lady's courser by the rein down the broken and steep path by which alone the bottom of the tangled dingle was accessible.

When placed on firm ground after the dangers

of a descent, in which her palfrey seemed to be sustained by the personal strength and address of the singular being who had hold of the bridle, the lady looked with some astonishment at a place so well adapted for concealment as that which she had now reached. It appeared evident that it was used for this purpose, for more than one stifled answer was given to a very low bugle note emitted by the Knight of the Tomb; and when the same note was repeated, about half a score of armed men, some wearing the dress of soldiers, others those of shepherds and agriculturists, showed themselves imperfectly, as if acknowledging the summons.

CHAPTER IX.

“HAIL to you, my gallant friends !” said the Knight of the Tomb to his companions, who seemed to welcome him with the eagerness of men engaged in the same perilous undertaking. “The winter has passed over, the festival of Palm Sunday is come, and as surely as the ice and snow of this season shall not remain to chill the earth through the ensuing summer, so surely we, in a few hours, keep our word to those southern braggarts, who think their language of boasting and malice has as much force over our Scottish bosoms, as the blast possesses over the autumn fruits; but it is not so. While we choose to remain concealed, they may as vainly seek to descry us, as a housewife would search for the needle she has dropped among the wither-

ed foliage of yon gigantic oak. Yet a few hours, and the lost needle shall become the exterminating sword of the Genius of Scotland, avenging ten thousand injuries, and especially the life of the gallant Lord Douglas, cruelly done to death as an exile from his native country."

An exclamation between a yell and a groan burst from the assembled retainers of Douglas, upon being reminded of the recent death of their chieftain; while they seemed at the same time sensible of the necessity of making little noise, lest they should give the alarm to some of the numerous English parties which were then traversing different parts of the forest. The acclamation, so cautiously uttered, had scarce died away in silence, when the Knight of the Tomb, or, to call him by his proper name, Sir James Douglas, again addressed his handful of faithful followers.

"One effort, my friends, may yet be made to end our strife with the southron without bloodshed. Fate has within a few hours thrown into my power the young heiress of Berkely, for whose sake it is said Sir John de Walton keeps

with such obstinacy the castle which is mine by inheritance. Is there one among you who dare go, as the honourable escort of Augusta de Berkely, bearing a letter, explaining the terms on which I am willing to restore her to her lover, to freedom, and to her English lordships?"

"If there is none other," said a tall man, dressed in the tattered attire of a woodsman, and being, in fact, no other than the very Michael Turnbull, who had already given so extraordinary a proof of his undaunted manhood, "I will gladly be the person who will be the lady's henchman on this expedition."

"Thou art never wanting," said the Douglas, "where a manly deed is to be done; but remember, this lady must pledge to us her word and oath that she will hold herself our faithful prisoner, rescue or no rescue; that she will consider herself as pledged for the life, freedom, and fair usage of Michael Turnbull; and that if Sir John de Walton refuse my terms, she must hold herself obliged to return with Turnbull to our presence, in order to be disposed of at our pleasure."

There was much in these conditions, which struck the Lady Augusta with natural doubt and horror; nevertheless, strange as it may seem, the declaration of the Douglas gave a species of decision to her situation, which might have otherwise been unattainable; and from the high opinion which she entertained of the Douglas's chivalry, she could not bring herself to think, that any part which he might play in the approaching drama would be other than that which a perfect good knight would, under all circumstances, maintain towards his enemy. Even with respect to De Walton, she felt herself relieved of a painful difficulty. The idea of her being discovered by the knight himself, in a male disguise, had preyed upon her spirits; and she felt as if guilty of a departure from the laws of womanhood, in having extended her favour towards him beyond maidenly limits; a step, too, which might tend to lessen her in the eyes of the lover for whom she had hazarded so much.

"The heart, she said, is lightly prized,
That is but lightly won;
And long shall mourn the heartless man,
That leaves his love too soon."

On the other hand, to be brought before him as a prisoner, was indeed a circumstance equally perplexing and unpleasing, but it was one which was beyond her control, and the Douglas, into whose hands she had fallen, appeared to her to represent the deity in the play, whose entrance was almost sufficient to bring its perplexities to a conclusion; she therefore not unwillingly submitted to take what oaths and promises were required by the party in whose hands she found herself, and accordingly engaged to be a true prisoner, whatever might occur. Meantime she strictly obeyed the directions of those who had her motions at command, devoutly praying that circumstances, in themselves so adverse, might nevertheless work together for the safety of her lover and her own freedom.

A pause ensued, during which a slight repast was placed before the Lady Augusta, who was wellnigh exhausted with the fatigues of her journey.

Douglas and his partisans, meanwhile, whispered together, as if unwilling she should hear their conference; while, to purchase their good-

will, if possible, she studiously avoided every appearance of listening.

After some conversation, Turnbull, who appeared to consider the lady as peculiarly his charge, said to her in a harsh voice, "Do not fear, lady, no wrong shall be done you; nevertheless, you must be content for a space to be blindfolded."

She submitted to this in silent terror; and the trooper, wrapping part of a mantle round her head, did not assist her to remount her palfrey, but lent her his arm to support her in this blindfolded state.

CHAPTER X.

THE ground which they traversed was, as Lady Augusta could feel, very broken and uneven, and sometimes, as she thought, encumbered with ruins, which were difficult to surmount. The strength of her comrade assisted her forward on such occasions ; but his help was so roughly administered, that the lady once or twice, in fear or suffering, was compelled to groan or sigh heavily, whatever was her desire to suppress such evidence of the apprehension which she underwent, or the pain which she endured. Presently, upon an occasion of this kind, she was distinctly sensible that the rough woodsman was removed from her side, and another of the party substituted in his stead, whose voice, more gentle

than that of his companion, she thought she had lately heard.

“Noble lady,” were the words, “fear not the slightest injury at our hands, and accept of my ministry instead of that of my henchman, who has gone forward with our letter; do not think me presuming on my situation, if I bear you in my arms through ruins where you could not easily move alone and blindfold.”

At the same time, the Lady Augusta Berkely felt herself raised from the earth in the strong arms of a man, and borne onward with the utmost gentleness, without the necessity of making those painful exertions which had been formerly required. She was ashamed of her situation; but, however delicate, it was no time to give vent to complaints, which might have given offence to persons whom it was her interest to conciliate. She, therefore, submitted to necessity, and heard the following words whispered in her ear.

“Fear nothing; there is no evil intended you; nor shall Sir John de Walton, if he loves you as you deserve at his hand, receive any harm.

on our part. We call on him but to do justice to ourselves and to you; and be assured you will best accomplish your own happiness by aiding our views, which are equally in favour of your wishes and your freedom."

The Lady Augusta would have made some answer to this, but her breath, betwixt fear and the speed with which she was transported, refused to permit her to use intelligible accents. Meantime she began to be sensible that she was enclosed within some building, and probably a ruinous one—for although the mode of her transportation no longer permitted her to ascertain the nature of her path in any respect distinctly, yet the absence of the external air—which was, however, sometimes excluded, and sometimes admitted in furious gusts—intimated that she was conducted through buildings partly entire, and in other places admitting the wind through wide rents and gaps. In one place it seemed to the lady as if she passed through a considerable body of people, all of whom observed silence, although there was sometimes heard among them a murmur, to which every one present in some degree

contributed, although the general sound did not exceed a whisper. Her situation made her attend to every circumstance, and she did not fail to observe that these persons made way for him who bore her, until at length she became sensible that he descended by the regular steps of a stair, and that she was now alone, excepting his company. Arrived, as it appeared to the lady, on more level ground, they proceeded on their singular road by a course which appeared neither direct nor easy, and through an atmosphere which was close to a smothering degree, and felt at the same time damp and disagreeable, as if from the vapours of a new made grave. Her guide again spoke.

“Bear up, Lady Augusta, for a little longer, and continue to endure that atmosphere which must be one day common to us all. By the necessity of my situation, I must resign my present office to your original guide, and can only give you my assurance, that he, nor any one else, shall offer you the least incivility or insult—and on this you may rely, on the faith of a man of honour.”

He placed her, as he said these words, upon the soft turf, and, to her infinite refreshment, made her sensible that she was once more in the open air, and free from the smothering atmosphere which had before oppressed her like that of a charnel-house. At the same time, she breathed in a whisper an anxious wish that she might be permitted to disencumber herself from the folds of the mantle, which excluded almost the power of breathing, though intended only to prevent her seeing by what road she travelled. She immediately found it unfolded, agreeably to her request, and hastened, with uncovered eyes, to take note of the scene around her.

It was overshadowed by thick oak trees, among which stood some remnants of buildings, or what might have seemed such, being perhaps the same in which she had been lately wandering. A clear fountain of living water bubbled forth from under the twisted roots of one of those trees, and offered the lady the opportunity of a draught of the pure element, and in which she also bathed her face, which had received more than one scratch in the course of her journey, in spite of

the care, and almost the tenderness, with which she had latterly been borne along. The cool water speedily stopt the bleeding of those trifling injuries, and the application served at the same time to recall the scattered senses of the damsel herself. Her first idea was, whether an attempt to escape, if such should appear possible, was not advisable. A moment's reflection, however, satisfied her that such a scheme was not to be thought of; and such second thoughts were confirmed by the approach of the gigantic form of the huntsman, Turnbull, the rough tones of whose voice were heard before his figure was obvious to her eye.

“ Were you impatient for my return, fair lady? Such as I,” he continued in an ironical tone of voice, “ who are foremost in the chase of wild stags and silvan cattle, are not in use to lag behind, when fair ladies, like you, are the objects of pursuit; and if I am not so constant in my attendance as you might expect, believe me, it is because I was engaged in another matter, to which I must sacrifice for a little even the duty of attending on you.”

“ I offer no resistance,” said the lady ; “ forbear, however, in discharging thy duty, to augment my uneasiness by thy conversation, for thy master hath pledged me his word that he will not suffer me to be alarmed or ill treated.”

“ Nay, fair one,” replied the huntsman, “ I ever thought it was fit to make interest by soft words with fair ladies ; but if you like it not, I have no such pleasure in hunting for fine holiday terms, but that I can with equal ease hold myself silent. Come, then, since we must wait upon this lover of yours ere morning closes, and learn his last resolution touching a matter which is become so strangely complicated, I will hold no more intercourse with you as a female, but talk to you as a person of sense, although an Englishwoman.”

“ You will,” replied the lady, “ best fulfil the intentions of those by whose orders you act, by holding no society with me whatever, otherwise than is necessary in the character of guide.”

The man lowered his brows, yet seemed to assent to what the Lady of Berkely proposed, and remained silent as they for some time pursued

their course, each pondering over their own share of meditation, which probably turned upon matters essentially different. At length the loud blast of a bugle was heard at no great distance from the unsocial fellow-travellers. "That is the person we seek," said Turnbull; "I know his blast from any other who frequents this forest, and my orders are to bring you to speech of him."

The blood started rapidly through the lady's veins at the thought of being thus unceremoniously presented to the knight, in whose favour she had confessed a rash preference more agreeable to the manners of those times, when exaggerated sentiments often inspired actions of extravagant generosity, than in our days, when every thing is accounted absurd which does not turn upon a motive connected with the immediate selfish interests of the actor himself. When Turnbull, therefore, winded his horn, as if in answer to the blast which they had heard, the lady was disposed to fly at the first impulse of shame and of fear. Turnbull perceived her intention, and caught hold of her with no very

gentle grasp, saying—"Nay, lady, it is to be understood that you play your own part in the drama, which, unless you continue on the stage, will conclude, unsatisfactorily to us all, in a combat at outrance between your lover and me, when it will appear which of us are most worthy of your favour."

"I will be patient," said the lady, bethinking her that even this strange man's presence, and the compulsion which he appeared to use towards her, was a sort of excuse to her female scruples, for coming into the presence of her lover, at least at her first appearance before him, in a disguise which her feelings confessed was not extremely decorous, or reconcilable to the dignity of her sex.

The moment after these thoughts had passed through her mind, the tramp of a horse was heard approaching; and Sir John de Walton, pressing through the trees, became aware of the presence of his lady, captive, as it seemed, in the grasp of a Scottish outlaw, who was only known to him by his former audacity at the hunting-match.

His surprise and joy only supplied the knight with those hasty expressions—"Caitiff, let go thy hold ! or die in thy profane attempt to control the motions of one whom the very sun in heaven should be proud to obey." At the same time, apprehensive that the huntsman might hurry the lady from his sight, by means of some entangled path—such as upon a former occasion had served him for escape—Sir John de Walton dropt his cumbrous lance, of which the trees did not permit him the perfect use, and, springing from his horse, approached Turnbull with his drawn sword.

The Scottishman, keeping his left hand still upon the lady's mantle, uplifted with his right his battle-axe, or Jedwood staff, for the purpose of parrying and returning the blow of his antagonist, but the lady spoke.

"Sir John de Walton," she said, "for heaven's sake, forbear all violence, till you hear upon what pacific object I am brought hither, and by what peaceful means these wars may be put an end to. This man, though an enemy of yours, has been to me a civil and respectful

guardian ; and I entreat you to forbear him while he speaks the purpose for which he has brought me hither."

"To speak of compulsion and the Lady de Berkely in the same breath, would itself be cause enough for instant death," said the Governor of Douglas Castle ; "but you command, lady, and I spare his insignificant life, although I have causes of complaint against him, the least of which were good warrant, had he a thousand lives, for the forfeiture of them all."

"John de Walton," replied Turnbull, "this lady well knows that no fear of thee operates in my mind to render this a peaceful meeting ; and were I not withheld by other circumstances of great consideration to the Douglas, as well as thyself, I should have no more fear in facing the utmost thou couldst do, than I have now in leveling that sapling to the earth it grows upon."

So saying, Michael Turnbull raised his battle-axe, and struck from a neighbouring oak-tree a branch, wellnigh as thick as a man's arm, which (with all its twigs and leaves) rushed to the ground between De Walton and the Scotch-

man, giving a singular instance of the keenness of his weapon, and the strength and dexterity with which he used it.

“ Let there be truce, then, between us, good fellow,” said Sir John de Walton, “ since it is the lady’s pleasure that such should be the case, and let me know what thou hast to say to me respecting her ?”

“ On that subject,” said Turnbull, “ my words are few, but, mark them, Sir Englishman. The Lady Augusta Berkely, wandering in this country, has become a prisoner of the noble Lord Douglas, the rightful inheritor of the castle and lordship, and he finds himself obliged to attach to the liberty of this lady the following conditions, being in all respects such as good and lawful warfare entitles a knight to exact. That is to say, in all honour and safety the Lady Augusta shall be delivered to Sir John de Walton, or those whom he shall name for the purpose of receiving her. On the other hand, the Castle of Douglas itself, together with all out-posts or garrisons thereunto belonging, shall be made over and surrendered by Sir John de Walton,

in the same situation, and containing the same provisions and artillery, as are now within their walls ; and the space of a month of truce shall be permitted to Sir James Douglas and Sir John de Walton farther to regulate the terms of surrender on both parts, having first plighted their knightly word and oath, that in the exchange of the honourable lady for the foresaid castle, lies the full import of the present agreement, and that every other subject of dispute shall, at the pleasure of the noble knights foresaid, be honourably compounded and agreed betwixt them ; or, at their pleasure, settled knightly by single combat, according to usage and in a fair field, before any honourable person, that may possess power enough to preside.”

It is not easy to conceive the astonishment of Sir John de Walton at hearing the contents of this extraordinary cartel ; he looked towards the Lady of Berkely with that aspect of despair with which a criminal may be supposed to see his guardian angel prepare for departure. Through her mind also similar ideas flowed, as if they contained a concession of what she had con-

sidered as the summit of her wishes, but under conditions disgraceful to her lover, like the cherub's fiery sword of yore, which was a barrier between our first parents and the blessings of paradise. Sir John de Walton, after a moment's hesitation, broke silence in these words:—

“Noble lady, you may be surprised if a condition be imposed upon me, having for its object your freedom; and if Sir John de Walton, already standing under those obligations to you, which he is proud of acknowledging, should yet hesitate on accepting, with the utmost eagerness, what must ensure your restoration to freedom and independence; but so it is, that the words now spoken have thrilled in mine ear without reaching to my understanding, and I must pray the Lady of Berkely for pardon if I take time to reconsider them for a short space.”

“And I,” replied Turnbull, “have only power to allow you half an hour for the consideration of an offer, in accepting which, methinks, you should jump shoulder-height, instead of asking any time for reflection. What does this cartel exact, save what your duty as a knight implicit,

ly obliges you to ? You have engaged yourself to become the agent of the tyrant Edward, in holding Douglas Castle, as his commander, to the prejudice of the Scottish nation, and of the Knight of Douglas Dale, who never, as a community or as an individual, were guilty of the least injury towards you ; you are therefore prosecuting a false path, unworthy of a good knight. On the other hand, the freedom and safety of your lady is now proposed to be pledged to you, with a full assurance of her liberty and honour, on consideration of your withdrawing from the unjust line of conduct, in which you have suffered yourself to be imprudently engaged. If you persevere in it, you place your own honour, and the lady's happiness, in the hands of men whom you have done every thing in your power to render desperate, and whom, thus irritated, it is most probable you may find such."

"It is not from thee at least," said the knight, "that I shall learn to estimate the manner in which Douglas will explain the laws of war, or De Walton receive them at his dictating."

“ I am not, then,” said Turnbull, “ received as a friendly messenger? Farewell, and think of this lady as being in any hands but those which are safe, while you make up at leisure your mind upon the message I have brought you. Come, madam, we must be gone.”

So saying, he seized upon the lady's hand, and pulled her, as if to force her to withdraw. The lady had stood motionless, and almost senseless, while these speeches were exchanged between the warriors; but when she felt the grasp of Michael Turnbull, she exclaimed, like one almost beside herself with fear—“ Help me, De Walton !”

The knight, stung to instant rage, assaulted the forester with the utmost fury, and dealt him with his long sword, almost at unawares, two or three heavy blows, by which he was so wounded that he sunk backwards in the thicket, and De Walton was about to dispatch him, when he was prevented by the anxious cry of the lady—“ Alas ! De Walton, what have you done? This man was only an ambassador, and should have

passed free from injury while he confined himself to the delivery of what he was charged with; and if thou hast slain him, who knows how frightful may prove the vengeance exacted!"

The voice of the lady seemed to recover the huntsman from the effects of the blows he had received; he sprung on his feet, saying—"Never mind me, nor think of my becoming the means of making mischief. The knight, in his haste, spoke without giving me warning and defiance, which gave him an advantage which, I think, he would otherwise have scorned to have taken in such a case. I will renew the combat on fairer terms, or call another champion, as the knight pleases." With these words he disappeared.

"Fear not, empress of De Walton's thoughts," answered the knight; "but believe, that if we regain together the shelter of Douglas Castle, and the safeguard of Saint George's Cross, thou mayst laugh at all. And if you can but pardon, what I shall never be able to forgive myself, the mole-like blindness which did not recognise the sun while under a temporary eclipse, the task

cannot be named too hard for mortal valour to achieve which I shall not willingly undertake, to wipe out the memory of my grievous fault."

"Mention it no more," said the lady; "it is not at such a time as this, when our lives are for the moment at stake, that quarrels upon slighter topics are to be recurred to. I can tell you, if you do not yet know, that the Scots are in arms in this vicinity, and that even the earth has yawned to conceal them from the sight of your garrison."

"Let it yawn, then," said Sir John de Walton, "and suffer every fiend in the infernal abyss to escape from his prison-house and reinforce our enemies—still, fairest, having received in thee a pearl of matchless price, my spurs shall be hacked from my heels by the basest scullion, if I turn my horse's head to the rear before the utmost force these ruffians can assemble, either upon earth or from underneath it. In thy name I defy them all to instant combat."

As Sir John de Walton pronounced these last words, in something of an exalted tone, a tall cavalier, arrayed in black armour of the simplest

form, stepped forth from that part of the thicket where Turnbull had disappeared. "I am," he said, "James of Douglas, and your challenge is accepted. I, the challenged, name the arms our knightly weapons as we now wear them, and our place of combat this field or dingle called the Bloody Sykes, the time being instant, and the combatants, like true knights, foregoing each advantage on either side."

"So be it, in God's name," said the English knight, who, though surprised at being called upon to so sudden an encounter with so formidable a warrior as young Douglas, was too proud to dream of avoiding the combat. Making a sign to the lady to retire behind him, that he might not lose the advantage which he had gained by setting her at liberty from the forester, he drew his sword, and with a deliberate and prepared attitude of offence moved slowly to the encounter. It was a dreadful one, for the courage and skill both of the native Lord of Douglas Dale, and of De Walton, were among the most renowned of the times, and perhaps the world of chivalry could hardly have produced two knights

more famous. Their blows fell as if urged by some mighty engine, where they were met and parried with equal strength and dexterity; nor seemed it likely, in the course of ten minutes' encounter, that an advantage would be gained by either combatant over the other. An instant they stopped by mutually implied assent, as it seemed, for the purpose of taking breath, during which Douglas said, "I beg that this noble lady may understand that her own freedom is no way concerned in the present contest, which entirely regards the injustice done by this Sir John de Walton, and by his nation of England, to the memory of my father and to my own natural rights."

"You are generous, Sir Knight," replied the lady; "but in what circumstances do you place me, if you deprive me of my protector by death or captivity, and leave me alone in a foreign land?"

"If such should be the event of the combat," replied Sir James, "the Douglas himself, lady, will safely restore thee to thy native land; for never did his sword do an injury for which

he was not willing to make amends with the same weapon; and if Sir John de Walton will make the slightest admission that he renounces maintaining the present strife, were it only by yielding up a feather from the plume of his helmet, Douglas will renounce every purpose on his part which can touch the lady's honour or safety, and the combat may be suspended until the national quarrel again brings us together."

Sir John de Walton pondered a moment, and the lady, although she did not speak, looked at him with eyes which plainly expressed how much she wished that he would choose the less hazardous alternative. But the knight's own scruples prevented his bringing the case to so favourable an arbitrement.

"Never shall it be said of Sir John de Walton," he replied, "that he compromised, in the slightest degree, his own honour, or that of his country. This battle may end in my defeat, or rather death, and in that case my earthly prospects are closed, and I resign to Douglas, with my last breath, the charge of the Lady Augusta, trusting that he will defend her with his life,

and find the means of replacing her with safety in the halls of her fathers. But while I survive, she may have a better, but will not need another protector than he who is honoured by being her own choice; nor will I yield up, were it a plume from my helmet, implying that I have maintained an unjust quarrel, either in the cause of England, or of the fairest of her daughters. Thus far alone I will concede to Douglas—an instant truce, provided the lady shall not be interrupted in her retreat to England, and the combat be fought out upon another day. The castle and territory of Douglas is the property of Edward of England, the governor in his name is the rightful governor, and on this point I will fight while my eyelids are unclosed.”

“Time flies,” said Douglas, “without waiting for our resolves; nor is there any part of his motions of such value, as that which is passing with every breath of vital air which we presently draw. Why should we adjourn till to-morrow that which can be as well finished to-day? Will our swords be sharper, or our arms stronger to wield them, than they are at this moment?

Douglas will do all which knight can do to succour a lady in distress; but he will not grant to her knight the slightest mark of deference, which Sir John de Walton vainly supposes himself able to extort by force of arms."

With these words, the knights engaged once more in mortal combat, and the lady felt uncertain whether she should attempt her escape through the devious paths of the wood, or abide the issue of this obstinate fight. It was rather her desire to see the fate of Sir John de Walton, than any other consideration, which induced her to remain, as if fascinated, upon the spot, where one of the fiercest quarrels ever fought was disputed by two of the bravest champions that ever drew sword. At last the lady attempted to put a stop to the combat, by appealing to the bells which began to ring for the service of the day, which was Palm Sunday.

"For Heaven's sake," she said—"for your own sakes, and for that of lady's love, and the duties of chivalry, hold your hands only for an hour, and take chance, that where strength is so

equal, means will be found of converting the truce into a solid peace. Think this is Palm Sunday, and will you defile with blood such a peculiar festival of Christianity? Intermit your feud at least so far as to pass to the nearest church, bearing with you branches, not in the ostentatious mode of earthly conquerors, but as rendering due homage to the rules of the blessed church, and the institutions of our holy religion."

"I was on my road, fair lady, for that purpose, to the holy church of Douglas," said the Englishman, "when I was so fortunate as to meet you at this place; nor do I object to proceed thither even now, holding truce for an hour, and I fear not to find there friends to whom I can commit you with assurance of safety, in case I am unfortunate in the combat which is now broken off, to be resumed after the service of the day."

"I also assent," said the Douglas, "to a truce for such short space; nor do I fear that there may be good Christians enough at the church, who will not see their master overpowered by

odds. Let us go thither, and each take the chance of what Heaven shall please to send us."

From these words, Sir John de Walton little doubted that Douglas had assured himself of a party among those who should there assemble; but he doubted not of so many of the garrison being present as would bridle every attempt at rising; and the risk, he thought, was worth incurring, since he should thereby secure an opportunity to place Lady Augusta de Berkely in safety, at least so far as to make her liberty depend on the event of a general conflict, instead of the precarious issue of a combat between himself and Douglas.

Both these distinguished knights were inwardly of opinion, that the proposal of the lady, though it relieved them from their present conflict, by no means bound them to abstain from the consequences which an accession of force might add to their general strength, and each relied upon his superiority, in some degree provided for by their previous proceedings. Sir John de Walton made almost certain of meeting with several of his bands of soldiers, who were

scouring the country and traversing the woods by his direction ; and Douglas, it may be supposed, had not ventured himself in person where a price was set upon his head, without being attended by a sufficient number of proved adherents, placed in more or less connexion with each other, and stationed for mutual support. Each, therefore, entertained well-grounded hopes, that, by adopting the truce proposed, he would ensure himself an advantage over his antagonist, although neither exactly knew in what manner or to what extent this success was to be obtained.

CHAPTER XI.

His talk was of another world—his bodements
Strange, doubtful, and mysterious; those who heard him
Listen'd as to a man in feverish dreams,
Who speaks of other objects than the present,
And mutters like to him who sees a vision.

Old Play.

ON the same Palm Sunday when De Walton and Douglas measured together their mighty swords, the minstrel Bertram was busied with the ancient Book of Prophecies, which we have already mentioned as the supposed composition of Thomas the Rhymer, but not without many anxieties as to the fate of his lady, and the events which were passing around him. As a minstrel, he was desirous of an auditor to enter into the discoveries which he should make in that mystic volume, as well as to assist in passing away the time; Sir John de Walton had furnished him,

in Gilbert Greenleaf the archer, with one who was well contented to play the listener "from morn to dewy eve," provided a flask of Gascon wine, or a stoup of good English ale, remained on the board. It may be remembered that De Walton, when he dismissed the minstrel from the dungeon, was sensible that he owed him some compensation for the causeless suspicion which had dictated his imprisonment, more particularly as he was a valued servant, and had shown himself the faithful confidant, of the Lady Augusta de Berkely, and the person who was moreover likely to know all the motives and circumstances of her Scottish journey. To secure his good wishes was, therefore, politic; and De Walton had intimated to his faithful archer that he was to lay aside all suspicion of Bertram, but at the same time keep him in sight, and, if possible, in good humour with the governor of the castle, and his adherents. Greenleaf accordingly had no doubt in his own mind, that the only way to please a minstrel was to listen with patience and commendation to the lays which he liked best to sing, or the tales which he most

loved to tell; and in order to ensure the execution of his master's commands, he judged it necessary to demand of the butler such store of good liquor, as could not fail to enhance the pleasure of his society.

Having thus fortified himself with the means of bearing a long interview with the minstrel, Gilbert Greenleaf proposed to confer upon him the bounty of an early breakfast, which, if it pleased him, they might wash down with a cup of sack, and, having his master's commands to show the minstrel any thing about the castle which he might wish to see, refresh their over wearied spirits by attending a part of the garrison of Douglas to the service of the day, which, as we have already seen, was of peculiar sanctity. Against such a proposal, the minstrel, a good Christian by profession, and, by his connexion with the joyous science, a good fellow, having no objections to offer, the two comrades, who had formerly little good-will towards each other, commenced their morning's repast on that fated Palm Sunday, with all manner of cordiality and good fellowship.

“Do not believe, worthy minstrel,” said the archer, “that my master in any respect disparages your worth or rank in referring you for company or conversation to so poor a man as myself. It is true, I am no officer of this garrison; yet for an old archer, who, for these thirty years, has lived by bow and bowstring, I do not (Our Lady make me thankful!) hold less share in the grace of Sir John de Walton, the Earl of Pembroke, and other approved good soldiers, than many of those giddy young men on whom commissions are conferred, and to whom confidences are intrusted, not on account of what they have done, but what their ancestors have done before them. I pray you to notice among them one youth placed at our head in De Walton’s absence, and who bears the honoured name of Aymer de Valence, being the same with that of the Earl of Pembroke, of whom I have spoken; this knight has also a brisk young page, whom men call Fabian Harbothel.”

“Is it to these gentlemen that your censure applies?” answered the minstrel; “I should have judged differently, having never, in the

course of my experience, seen a young man more courteous and amiable than the young knight you named."

"I nothing dispute that it may be so," said the archer, hastening to amend the false step which he had made; "but in order that it should be so, it will be necessary that he conform to the usages of his uncle, taking the advice of experienced old soldiers in the emergencies which may present themselves; and not believing, that the knowledge, which it takes many years of observation to acquire, can be at once conferred by the slap of the flat of a sword, and the magic words, 'Rise up, Sir Arthur'—or however the case may be."

"Doubt not, Sir Archer," replied Bertram, "that I am fully aware of the advantage to be derived from conversing with men of experience like you: it benefiteth men of every persuasion, and I myself am oft reduced to lament my want of sufficient knowledge of armorial bearings, signs, and cognizances, and would right fain have thy assistance, where I am a stranger alike to the names of places, of persons, and description

of banners and emblems by which great families are distinguished from each other, so absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of my present task."

"Pennons and banners," answered the archer, "I have seen right many, and can assign, as is a soldier's wont, the name of the leader to the emblem under which he musters his followers; nevertheless, worthy minstrel, I cannot presume to understand what you call prophecies, with or under warranted authority of old painted books, expositions of dreams, oracles, revelations, invocations of damned spirits, judicials, astrologicals, and other gross and palpable offences, whereby men, pretending to have the assistance of the devil, do impose upon the common people, in spite of the warnings of the Privy Council; not, however, that I suspect you, worthy minstrel, of busying yourself with these attempts to explain futurity, which are dangerous attempts, and may be truly said to be penal, and part of treason."

"There is something in what you say," replied the minstrel; "yet it applieth not to books and manuscripts such as I have been consulting;

part of which things therein written having already come to pass, authorize us surely to expect the completion of the rest; nor would I have much difficulty in showing you from this volume, that enough has been already proved true, to entitle us to look with certainty to the accomplishment of that which remains."

"I should be glad to hear that," answered the archer, who entertained little more than a soldier's belief respecting prophecies and auguries, but yet cared not bluntly to contradict the minstrel upon such subjects, as he had been instructed by Sir John de Walton to comply with his humour. Accordingly the minstrel began to recite verses, which, in our time, the ablest interpreter could not make sense out of.

"When the cock crows, keep well his comb,
For the fox and the fulmart they are false both.
When the raven and the rook have rounded together,
And the kid in his cliff shall accord to the same,
Then shall they be bold, and soon to battle thereafter.
Then the birds of the raven rugs and reives,
And the leal men of Lothian are louping on their horse;
Then shall the poor people be spoiled full near,
And the Abbeyes be burnt truly that stand upon Tweed;
They shall burn and slay, and great reif make;

There shall no poor man who say whose man he is :
Then shall the land be lawless, for love there is none.
Then falset shall have foot fully five years ;
Then truth surely shall be tint, and none shall lippen to other ;
The one cousing shall not trust the other,
Not the son the father, nor the father the son ;
For to have his goods he would have him hanged,"
 &c., &c., &c.

The archer listened to these mystic prognostications, which were not the less wearisome that they were, in a considerable degree, unintelligible ; at the same time subduing his Hotspur-like disposition to tire of the recitation, yet at brief intervals comforting himself with an application to the wine-flagon, and enduring as he might what he neither understood nor took interest in. Meanwhile the minstrel proceeded with his explanation of the dubious and imperfect vaticinations of which we have given a sufficient specimen.

" Could you wish," said he to Greenleaf, " a more exact description of the miseries which have passed over Scotland in these latter days ? Have not these the raven and rook, the fox and the fulmart, explained ; either because the nature

of the birds or beasts bear an individual resemblance to those of the knights who display them on their banners, or otherwise are bodied forth by actual blazonry on their shields, and come openly into the field to ravage and destroy? Is not the total disunion of the land plainly indicated by these words, that connexions of blood shall be broken asunder, that kinsmen shall not trust each other, and that the father and son, instead of putting faith in their natural connexion, shall seek each other's life, in order to enjoy his inheritance? The *leal men* of Lothian are distinctly mentioned as taking arms, and there is plainly allusion to the other events of these late Scottish troubles. The death of this last William is obscurely intimated under the type of a hound, which was that good lord's occasional cognizance.

‘ The hound that was harmed then muzzled shall be,
Who loved him worst shall weep for his wreck ;
Yet shall a whelp rise of the same race,
That rudely shall roar and rule the whole north,
And quit the whole quarrel of old deeds done,
Though he from his hold be kept back awhile.
True Thomas told me this in a troublesome time,
In a harvest morning at Eldoun hills.’

“ This hath a meaning, Sir Archer,” continued the minstrel, “ and which flies as directly to its mark as one of your own arrows, although there may be some want of wisdom in making the direct explication. Being, however, upon assurance with you, I do not hesitate to tell you, that in my opinion this lion’s whelp that waits its time, means this same celebrated Scottish prince, Robert the Bruce, who, though repeatedly defeated, has still, while hunted with bloodhounds, and surrounded by enemies of every sort, maintained his pretensions to the crown of Scotland, in despite of King Edward, now reigning.”

“ Minstrel,” answered the soldier, “ you are my guest, and we have sat down together as friends to this simple meal in good comradeship ; I must tell thee, however, though I am loath to disturb our harmony, that thou art the first who hast adventured to speak a word before Gilbert Greenleaf in favour of that outlawed traitor, Robert Bruce, who has by his seditions so long disturbed the peace of this realm. Take my advice, and be silent on this topic ; for,

believe me, the sword of a true English archer will spring from its scabbard without consent of its master, should it hear aught said to the disparagement of bonny St George and his ruddy cross; nor shall the authority of Thomas the Rhymer, or any other prophet in Scotland, England, or Wales, be considered as an apology for such unbecoming predictions."

"I were loath to give offence at any time," said the minstrel, "much more to provoke you to anger, when I am in the very act of experiencing your hospitality. I trust, however, you will remember that I do not come your uninvited guest, and that if I speak to you of future events, I do so without having the least intention to add my endeavour to bring them to pass; for, God knows, it is many years since my sincere prayer has been for peace and happiness to all men, and particularly honour and happiness to the land of Bowmen, in which I was born, and which I am bound to remember in my prayers beyond all other nations in the world."

"It is well that you do so," said the archer; "for so you shall best maintain your bounden

duty to the fair land of your birth, which is the richest that the sun shines upon. Something, however, I would know, if it suits with your pleasure to tell me, and that is, whether you find any thing in these rude rhymes appearing to affect the safety of the Castle of Douglas, where we now are?—for, mark me, Sir Minstrel, I have observed that these mouldering parchments, when or by whomsoever composed, have so far a certain coincidence with the truth, that when such predictions which they contain are spread abroad in the country, and create rumours of plots, conspiracies, and bloody wars, they are very apt to cause the very mischances which they would be thought only to predict.”

“It were not very cautious in me,” said the minstrel, “to choose a prophecy for my theme, which had reference to any attack on this garrison; for in such case I should, according to your ideas, lay myself under suspicion of endeavouring to forward what no person could more heartily regret than myself.”

“Take my word for it, good friend,” said the archer, “that it shall not be thus with thee; for

I neither will myself conceive ill of thee, nor report thee to Sir John de Walton as meditating harm towards him or his garrison,—nor, to speak truth, would Sir John de Walton be willing to believe any one who did. He thinks highly, and undoubtedly deservedly, of thy good faith towards thy lady, and would conceive it unjust to suspect the fidelity of one who has given evidence of his willingness to meet death rather than betray the least secret of his mistress.”

“ In preserving her secret,” said Bertram, “ I only discharged the duty of a faithful servant, leaving it to her to judge how long such a secret ought to be preserved ; for a faithful servant ought to think as little of the issue towards himself of the commission which he bears, as the band of floss silk concerns itself with the secret of the letter which it secures. And, touching your question—I have no objections, although merely to satisfy your curiosity, to unfold to you that these old prophecies do contain some intimations of wars befalling in Douglas Dale, between an haggard, or wild hawk, which I take to be the cognizance of Sir John de Walton, and

the three stars, or martlets, which is the cognizance of the Douglas; and more particulars I could tell of these onslaughts, did I know whereabouts is a place in these woods termed Bloody Sykes, the scene also, as I comprehend, of slaughter and death, between the followers of the three stars and those who hold the part of the Saxon, or King of England."

"Such a place," replied Gilbert Greenleaf, "I have heard often mentioned by that name among the natives of these parts; nevertheless it is in vain to seek to discover the precise spot, as these wily Scots conceal from us with care every thing respecting the geography of their country, as it is called by learned men; but we may here mention the Bloody Sykes, Bottomless Myre, and other places, as portentous names, to which their traditions attach some signification of war and slaughter. If it suits your wish, however, we can on our way to the church, try to find this place called Bloody Sykes, which I doubt not we shall trace out long before the traitors who meditate an attack upon us will find a power sufficient for the attempt."

Accordingly the minstrel and archer, the latter of whom was by this time reasonably well refreshed with wine, marched out of the Castle of Douglas, without waiting for others of the garrison, resolving to seek the dingle bearing the ominous name of Bloody Sykes, concerning which the archer only knew that by mere accident he had heard of a place bearing such a name, at the hunting-match made under the auspices of Sir John de Walton, and knew that it lay in the woods somewhere near the town of Douglas, and in the vicinage of the castle.

CHAPTER XII.

Hotspur. I cannot choose ; sometimes he angers me
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant,
Of the dreamer Merlin, and his prophecies ;
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clipt-wing'd griffin and a moulted raven,
A couching lion, and a ramping cat,
And such a deal of skimble-skamble stuff,
As puts me from my faith.

King Henry IV.

THE conversation between the minstrel and the ancient archer naturally pursued a train somewhat resembling that of Hotspur and Glendower, in which Gilbert Greenleaf by degrees took a larger share than was apparently consistent with his habits and education : but the truth was, that as he exerted himself to recall the recognizances of military chieftains, their war-cries, emblems, and other types by which they distinguished themselves in battle, and might undoubt-

edly be indicated in prophetic rhymes, he began to experience the pleasure which most men entertain when they find themselves unexpectedly possessed of a faculty which the moment calls upon them to employ, and renders them important in the possession of. The minstrel's sound good sense was certainly somewhat surprised at the inconsistencies sometimes displayed by his companion, as he was carried off by the willingness to make show of his newly discovered faculty on the one hand, and, on the other, to call to mind the prejudices which he had nourished during his whole life against minstrels, who, with the whole train of legends and fables, were the more likely to be false, as being generally derived from the "North Countrie."

As they strolled from one glade of the forest to another, the minstrel began to be surprised at the number of Scottish votaries whom they met, and who seemed to be hastening to the church, and, as it appeared by the boughs which they carried, to assist in the ceremony of the day. To each of these the archer put a question respecting the existence of a place called Bloody Sykes,

and where it was to be found—but all seemed either to be ignorant on the subject, or desirous of evading it, for which they found some pretext in the jolly archer's manner of interrogation, which savoured a good deal of the genial breakfast. The general answer was, that they knew no such place, or had other matters to attend to upon the morn of a holy-tide than answering frivolous questions. At last, when, in one or two instances, the answer of the Scottish almost approached to sullenness, the minstrel remarked it, observing that there was ever some mischief on foot when the people of this country could not find a civil answer to their betters, which is usually so ready among them, and that they appeared to be making a strong muster for the service of Palm Sunday.

“ You will doubtless, Sir Archer,” continued the minstrel, “ make your report to your knight accordingly ; for I promise you, that if you do not, I myself, whose lady's freedom is also concerned, will feel it my duty to place before Sir John de Walton the circumstances which make me entertain suspicion of this extraordinary con-

fluence of Scottish men, and the surliness which has replaced their wonted courtesy of manners."

"Tush, Sir Minstrel," replied the archer, displeased at Bertram's interference, "believe me, that armies have ere now depended on my report to the general, which has always been perspicuous and clear, according to the duties of war. Your walk, my worthy friend, has been in a separate department, such as affairs of peace, old songs, prophecies, and the like, in which it is far from my thoughts to contend with you; but credit me, it will be most for the reputation of both, that we do not attempt to interfere with what concerns each other."

"It is far from my wish to do so," replied the minstrel; "but I would wish that a speedy return should be made to the castle, in order to ask Sir John de Walton's opinion of that which we have but just seen."

"To this," replied Greenleaf, "there can be no objection; but, would you seek the governor at the hour which now is, you will find him most readily by going to the church of Douglas, to which he regularly wends on occasions such

as the present, with the principal part of his officers, to ensure, by his presence, that no tumult arise (of which there is no little dread) between the English and the Scottish. Let us therefore hold to our original intention of attending the service of the day, and we shall rid ourselves of these entangled woods, and gain the shortest road to the church of Douglas."

"Let us go then with all dispatch," said the minstrel; "and with the greater haste, that it appears to me that something has passed on this very spot this morning, which argues that the Christian peace due to the day has not been inviolably observed. What mean these drops of blood?" alluding to those which had flowed from the wounds of Turnbull—"Wherefore is the earth impressed with these deep dints, the footsteps of armed men advancing and retreating, doubtless, according to the chances of a fierce and heady conflict?"

"By Our Lady," returned Greenleaf, "I must own that thou seest clear. What were my eyes made of when they permitted thee to be the first discoverer of these signs of conflict? Here are

feathers of a blue plume, which I ought to remember, seeing my knight assumed it, or at least permitted me to place it in his helmet, this morning, in sign of returning hope, from the liveliness of its colour. But here it lies, shorn from his head, and, if I may guess, by no friendly hand. Come, friend, to the church—to the church—and thou shalt have my example of the manner in which De Walton ought to be supported when in danger.”

He led the way through the town of Douglas, entering at the southern gate, and up the very street in which Sir Aymer de Valence had charged the Phantom Knight.

We can now say more fully, that the church of Douglas had originally been a stately Gothic building, whose towers, arising high above the walls of the town, bore witness to the grandeur of its original construction. It was now partly ruinous, and the small portion of open space which was retained for public worship was fitted up in the family aisle, where its deceased lords rested from worldly labours and the strife of war. From the open ground in the

front of the building, their eye could pursue a considerable part of the course of the river Douglas, which approached the town from the southwest, bordered by a line of hills fantastically diversified in their appearance, and in many places covered with copsewood, which descended towards the valley, and formed a part of the tangled and intricate woodland by which the town was surrounded. The river itself, sweeping round the west side of the town, and from thence northward, supplied that large inundation or artificial piece of water which we have already mentioned. Several of the Scottish people, bearing willow branches, or those of yew, to represent the palms which were the symbol of the day, seemed wandering in the churchyard as if to attend the approach of some person of peculiar sanctity, or procession of monks and friars, come to render the homage due to the solemnity. At the moment almost that Bertram and his companion entered the churchyard, the Lady of Berkeley, who was in the act of following Sir John de Walton into the church, after having witnessed his conflict with the young Knight of

Douglas, caught a glimpse of her faithful minstrel, and instantly determined to regain the company of that old servant of her house and confidant of her fortunes, and trust to the chance afterwards of being rejoined by Sir John de Walton, with a sufficient party to provide for her safety, which she in no respect doubted it would be his care to collect. She darted away accordingly from the path in which she was advancing, and reached the place where Bertram, with his new acquaintance Greenleaf, were making some enquiries of the soldiers of the English garrison, whom the service of the day had brought there.

Lady Augusta Berkely, in the mean time, had an opportunity to say privately to her faithful attendant and guide, "Take no notice of me, friend Bertram, but take heed, if possible, that we be not again separated from each other." Having given him this hint, she observed that it was adopted by the minstrel, and that he presently afterwards looked round and set his eye upon her, as, muffled in her pilgrim's cloak, she slowly withdrew to another part of the

cemetery, and seemed to halt until, detaching himself from Greenleaf, he should find an opportunity of joining her.

Nothing, in truth, could have more sensibly affected the faithful minstrel than the singular mode of communication which acquainted him that his mistress was safe, and at liberty to choose her own motions, and, as he might hope, disposed to extricate herself from the dangers which surrounded her in Scotland by an immediate retreat to her own country and domain. He would gladly have approached and joined her, but she took an opportunity by a sign to caution him against doing so, while at the same time he remained somewhat apprehensive of the consequences of bringing her under the notice of his new friend, Greenleaf, who might perhaps think it proper to busy himself so as to gain some favour with the knight who was at the head of the garrison. Meantime the old archer continued his conversation with Bertram, while the minstrel, like many other men similarly situated, heartily wished that his well-meaning companion had been a hundred fathoms under ground,

so his evanishment had given him license to join his mistress ; but all he had in his power was to approach her as near as he could, without creating any suspicion.

“ I would pray you, worthy minstrel,” said Greenleaf, after looking carefully round, “ that we may prosecute together the theme which we were agitating before we came hither ; is it not your opinion, that the Scottish natives have fixed this very morning for some of those dangerous attempts which they have repeatedly made, and which are so carefully guarded against by the governors placed in this district of Douglas by our good King Edward, our rightful sovereign ?”

“ I cannot see,” replied the minstrel, “ on what grounds you found such an apprehension, or what you see here in the churchyard different from that you talked of as we approached it, when you held me rather in scorn, for giving way to some suspicions of the same kind.”

“ Do you not see,” added the archer, “ the numbers of men, with strange faces, and in various disguisements, who are thronging about

these ancient ruins, which are usually so solitary? Yonder, for example, sits a boy, who seems to shun observation, and whose dress, I will be sworn, has never been shaped in Scotland."

"And if he is an English pilgrim," replied the minstrel, observing that the archer pointed towards the Lady of Berkely, "he surely affords less matter of suspicion."

"I know not that," said old Greenleaf, "but I think it will be my duty to inform Sir John de Walton, if I can reach him, that there are many persons here, who in outward appearance neither belong to the garrison, nor to this part of the country."

"Consider," said Bertram, "before you harass with accusation a poor young man, and subject him to the consequences which must necessarily attend upon suspicions of this nature, how many circumstances call forth men peculiarly to devotion at this period. Not only is this the time of the triumphal entrance of the founder of the Christian religion into Jerusalem, but the day itself is called *Dominica Confitentium*, or the Sunday of Confessors, and the palm-tree, or the

box and yew, which are used as its substitutes, and which are distributed to the priests, are burnt solemnly to ashes, and those ashes distributed among the pious, by the priests, upon the Ash-Wednesday of the succeeding year, all which rites and ceremonies in our country are observed, by order of the Christian church ; nor ought you, gentle archer, nor can you without a crime, persecute those as guilty of designs upon your garrison, who can ascribe their presence here to their desire to discharge the duties of the day ; and look ye at yon numerous procession approaching with banner and cross, and, as it appears, consisting of some churchman of rank, and his attendants ; let us first enquire who he is, and it is probable we shall find in his name and rank sufficient security for the peaceable and orderly behaviour of those whom piety has this day assembled at the church of Douglas.”

Greenleaf accordingly made the investigation recommended by his companion, and received information that the holy man, who headed the procession, was no other than the diocesan of the district, the Archbishop of Glasgow, who

had come to give his countenance to the rites with which the day was to be sanctified.

The prelate accordingly entered the walls of the dilapidated churchyard, preceded by his cross-bearers, and attended by numbers, with boughs of yew and other evergreens, used on the festivity instead of palms. Among them the holy father showered his blessing, accompanied by signs of the cross, which were met with devout exclamations by such of the worshippers as crowded around him :—" To thee, reverend father, we apply for pardon for our offences, which we humbly desire to confess to thee, in order that we may obtain pardon from heaven."

In this manner the congregation and the dignified clergyman met together, exchanging pious greeting, and seemingly intent upon nothing but the rites of the day. The acclamations of the congregation mingled with the deep voice of the officiating priest, dispensing the sacred ritual ; the whole forming a scene which, conducted with the Catholic skill and ceremonial, was at once imposing and affecting.

The archer, on seeing the zeal with which

the people in the churchyard, as well as a number who issued from the church, hastened proudly to salute the bishop of the diocese, was rather ashamed of the suspicions which he had entertained of the sincerity of the good man's purpose in coming hither. Taking advantage of a fit of devotion, not perhaps very common with old Greenleaf, who at this moment thrust himself forward to share in those spiritual advantages which the prelate was dispensing, Bertram slipped clear of his English friend, and, gliding to the side of the Lady Augusta, exchanged, by the pressure of the hand, a mutual congratulation upon having rejoined company. On a sign by the minstrel, they withdrew to the inside of the church, so as to remain unobserved amidst the crowd, in which they were favoured by the dark shadows of some parts of the building.

The body of the church, broken as it was, and hung round with the armorial trophies of the last Lords of Douglas, furnished rather the appearance of a sacrilegious desecrated ruin, than the inside of a holy place ; yet some care appeared to have been taken to prepare it for the ser-

vice of the day. At the lower end hung the great escutcheon of the Earl of Douglas, who had lately died a prisoner in England ; around that escutcheon were placed the smaller shields of his sixteen ancestors, and a deep black shadow was diffused by the whole mass, unless where relieved by the glance of the coronets, or the glimmer of bearings particularly gay in emblazonry. I need not say, that in other respects the interior of the church was much dismantled, it being the very same place in which Sir Aymer de Valence held an interview with the old sexton ; and who now, drawing into a separate corner some of the straggling parties whom he had collected, and brought to the church, kept on the alert, and appeared ready for an attack as well at mid-day as at the witching hour of midnight. This was the more necessary, as the eye of Sir John de Walton seemed busied in searching from one place to another, as if unable to find the object he was in quest of, which the reader will easily understand to be the Lady Augusta de Berkely, of whom he had lost sight in the pressure of the multitude. At the eastern part of the

church was fitted up a temporary altar, by the side of which, arrayed in his robes, the Archbishop of Glasgow had taken his place, with such priests and attendants as composed his episcopal retinue. His suite was neither numerous nor richly attired, nor did his own appearance present a splendid specimen of the wealth and dignity of the episcopal order. When he laid down, however, his golden cross, at the stern command of the King of England, that of simple wood, which he assumed instead thereof, did not possess less authority, nor command less awe among the clergy and people of the diocese.

The various persons, natives of Scotland, now gathered around, seemed to watch his motions, as those of a descended saint, and the English waited in mute astonishment, apprehensive that at some unexpected signal an attack would be made upon them, either by the powers of earth or heaven, or perhaps by both in combination. The truth is, that so great was the devotion of the Scottish clergy of the higher ranks to the interests of the party of Bruce, that the English

had become jealous of permitting them to interfere even with those ceremonies of the church which were placed under their proper management, and thence the presence of the Archbishop of Glasgow, officiating at a high festival in the church of Douglas, was a circumstance of rare occurrence, and not unattended both with wonder and suspicion. A council of the church, however, had lately called the distinguished prelates of Scotland to the discharge of their duty on the festivity of Palm Sunday, and neither English nor Scottish saw the ceremony with indifference. An unwonted silence which prevailed in the church, filled, as it appeared, with persons of different views, hopes, wishes, and expectations, resembled one of those solemn pauses which often take place before a strife of the elements, and are well understood to be the forerunners of some dreadful concussion of nature. All animals, according to their various nature, express their sense of the approaching tempest; the cattle, the deer, and other inhabitants of the walks of the forest,

withdraw to the inmost recesses of their pastures ; the sheep crowd into their fold ; and the dull stupor of universal nature, whether animate or inanimate, presages its speedily awaking into general convulsion and disturbance, when the lurid lightning shall hiss at command of the diapason of the thunder.

It was thus that, in deep suspense, those who had come to the church in arms at the summons of the Douglas, awaited and expected every moment a signal to attack ; while the soldiers of the English garrison, aware of the evil disposition of the natives towards them, were reckoning every moment when the well-known shout of “ Bows and bills ! ” should give signal for a general conflict, and both parties, gazing fiercely upon each other, seemed to expect the fatal onset.

Notwithstanding the tempest, which appeared every moment ready to burst, the Archbishop of Glasgow proceeded with the utmost solemnity to perform the ceremonies proper to the day ; he paused from time to time to survey the throng, as if to calculate whether the turbulent passions

of those around him would be so long kept under as to admit of his duties being brought to a close in a manner becoming the time and place.

The prelate had just concluded the service, when a person advanced towards him with a solemn and mournful aspect, and asked if the reverend father could devote a few moments to administer comfort to a dying man who was lying wounded close by.

The churchman signified a ready acquiescence, amidst a stillness which, when he surveyed the lowering brows of one party at least of those who were in the church, boded no peaceable termination to this fated day. The father motioned to the messenger to show him the way, and proceeded on his mission, attended by some of those who were understood to be followers of the Douglas.

There was something peculiarly striking, if not suspicious, in the interview which followed. In a subterranean vault was deposited the person of a large tall man, whose blood flowed copiously through two or three ghastly wounds, and streamed amongst the trusses of straw on which he lay; while his features exhibited a mixture of stern-

ness and ferocity, which seemed prompt to kindle into a still more savage expression.

The reader will probably conjecture that the person in question was no other than Michael Turnbull, who, wounded in the rencounter of the morning, had been left by some of his friends upon the straw, which was arranged for him by way of couch, to live or die as he best could. The Prelate, on entering the vault, lost no time in calling the attention of the wounded man to the state of his spiritual affairs, and assisting him to such comfort as the doctrine of the church directed should be administered to departing sinners. The words exchanged between them were of that grave and severe character which passes between the ghostly father and his pupil, when one world is rolling away from the view of the sinner, and another is displaying itself in all its terrors, and thundering in the ear of the penitent that retribution which the deeds done in the flesh must needs prepare him to expect. This is one of the most solemn meetings which can take place between earthly beings ; and the courageous character of the Jedwood forester, as well as the be-

nevolent and pious expression of the old churchman, considerably enhanced the pathos of the scene.

“Turnbull,” said the churchman, “I trust you will believe me when I say, that it grieves my heart to see thee brought to this situation by wounds which, it is my duty to tell you, you must consider mortal.”

“Is the chase ended then?” said the Jedwood man, with a sigh. “I care not, good father, for I think I have borne me as becomes a gallant quarry, and that the old forest has lost no credit by me, whether in pursuit, or in bringing to bay; and even in this last matter, methinks this gay English knight would not have come off with such advantage had the ground on which we stood been alike indifferent to both, or had I been aware of his onset; but it will be seen, by any one who takes the trouble to examine, that poor Michael Turnbull’s foot slipped twice in the *melée*, otherwise it had not been his fate to be lying here in the dead-thraw;* while yonder

* Or death agony.

southron would probably have died like a dog, upon this bloody straw, in his place."

The bishop replied, advising his penitent to turn from vindictive thoughts respecting the death of others, and endeavour to fix his attention upon his own departure from existence, which seemed shortly about to take place.

"Nay," replied the wounded man, "you, father, undoubtedly know best what is fit for me to do; yet methinks it would not be very well with me, if I had prolonged to this time of day the task of revising my life, and I am not the man to deny that mine has been a bloody and a desperate one. But you will grant me I never bore malice to a brave enemy for having done me an injury, and show me the man, being a Scotchman born, and having a natural love for his own country, who hath not, in these times, rather preferred a steel cap to a hat and feather, or who hath not been more conversant with drawn blades than with prayer-book; and you yourself know, father, whether, in our proceedings against the English interest, we have not uniformly had the countenance of the sincere

fathers of the Scottish Church, and whether we have not been exhorted to take arms and make use of them for the honour of the King of Scotland, and the defence of our own rights."

"Undoubtedly," said the prelate, "such have been our exhortations towards our oppressed countrymen, nor do I now teach you a different doctrine ; nevertheless, having now blood around me, and a dying man before me, I have need to pray that I have not been misled from the true path, and thus become the means of misdirecting others. May Heaven forgive me if I have done so, since I have only to plead my sincere and honest intention in excuse for the erroneous counsel which I may have given to you and others touching these wars. I am conscious that in encouraging you so to stain your swords in blood, I have departed in some degree from the character of my profession, which enjoins that we neither shed blood, nor are the occasion of its being shed. May Heaven enable us to obey our duties and to repent of our errors, especially such as have occasioned the death or distress of our fellow-creatures ! And, above all, may this

dying Christian become aware of his errors, and repent with sincerity of having done to others that which he would not willingly have suffered at their hand !”

“ For that matter,” answered Turnbull, “ the time has never been when I would not exchange a blow with the best man who ever lived ; and if I was not in constant practice of the sword, it was because I have been brought up to the use of the Jedwood-axe, which the English call a partisan, and which makes little difference, I understand, from the sword and poniard.”

“ The distinction is not great,” said the bishop ; “ but I fear, my friend, that life taken with what you call the Jedwood-axe, gives you no privilege over him who commits the same deed, and inflicts the same injury, with any other weapon.”

“ Nay, worthy father,” said the penitent, “ I must own that the effect of the weapons is the same, as far as concerns the man who suffers ; but I would pray of you information, why a Jedwood man ought not to use, as is the custom of his country, a Jedwood-axe, being, as is implied

in the name, the offensive weapon proper to his country ?”

“ The crime of murder,” said the bishop, “ consists not in the weapon with which the crime is inflicted, but in the pain which the murderer inflicts upon his fellow-creature, and the breach of good order which he introduces into heaven’s lovely and peaceable creation ; and it is by turning your repentance upon this crime that you may fairly expect to propitiate Heaven for your offences, and at the same time to escape the consequences which are denounced in Holy Writ against those by whom man’s blood shall be shed.”

“ But, good father,” said the wounded man, “ you know as well as any one, that in this company, and in this very church, there are upon the watch scores of both Scotchmen and Englishmen, who come here not so much to discharge the religious duties of the day, as literally to bereave each other of their lives, and give a new example of the horror of those feuds which the two extremities of Britain nourish against each other. What conduct, then, is a poor man like

me to hold? Am I not to raise this hand against the English, which methinks I can still make a tolerably efficient one—or am I, for the first time in my life, to hear the war-cry when it is raised, and hold back my sword from the slaughter? Methinks it will be difficult, perhaps altogether impossible, for me to do so; but if such is the pleasure of Heaven, and your advice, most reverend father, unquestionably I must do my best to be governed by your directions, as of one who has a right and title to direct us in every dilemma, or case, as they term it, of troubled conscience.”

“Unquestionably,” said the archbishop, “it is my duty, as I have already said, to give no occasion this day for the shedding of blood, or the breach of peace; and I must charge you, as my penitent, that upon your soul’s safety, you do not minister any occasion to affray or bloodshed, either by maintaining such in your own person, or inciting others to the same; for by following a different course of advice, I am certain that you, as well as myself, would act sinfully and out of character.”

“So I will endeavour to think, reverend father,” answered the huntsman; “nevertheless I hope it will be remembered in my favour, that I am the first person bearing the surname of Turnbull, together with the proper name of the Prince of Archangels himself, who has at any time been able to sustain the affront occasioned by the presence of a southron with a drawn sword, and was not thereby provoked to pluck forth his own weapon, and to lay about him.”

“Take care, my son,” returned the Prelate of Glasgow, “and observe, that even now thou art departing from those resolutions which, but a few minutes since, thou didst adopt upon serious and just consideration; wherefore do not be, O my son! like the sow that has wallowed in the mire, and, having been washed, repeats its act of pollution, and becomes again yet fouler than it was before.”

“Well, reverend father,” replied the wounded man, “although it seems almost unnatural for Scottish men and English to meet and part without a buffet, yet I will endeavour most faithfully not to minister any occasion of strife, nor, if

possible, to snatch at any such occasion as shall be ministered to me."

"In doing so," returned the bishop, "thou wilt best atone for the injury which thou hast done to the law of Heaven upon former occasions, and thou shalt prevent the causes for strife betwixt thee and thy brethren of the southern land, and shalt eschew the temptation towards that blood-guiltiness which is so rife in this our day and generation. And do not think that I am imposing upon thee, by these admonitions, a duty more difficult than it is in thy covenant to bear, as a man and as a Christian. I myself am a man, and a Scotchman, and, as such, I feel offended at the unjust conduct of the English towards our country and sovereign; and thinking as you do yourself, I know what you must suffer when you are obliged to submit to national insults, unretaliated and unrevenged. But let us not conceive ourselves the agents of that retributive vengeance which Heaven has, in a peculiar degree, declared to be its own attribute. Let us, while we see and feel the injuries inflicted on our own country, not forget that our own raids, ambuscades, and surprisals, have been at least equally

fatal to the English as their attacks and forays have been to us ; and, in short, let the mutual injuries of the crosses of Saint Andrew and of Saint George be no longer considered as hostile to the inhabitants of the opposite district, at least during the festivals of religion ; but as they are mutually signs of redemption, let them be, in like manner, intimations of forbearance and peace on both sides."

" I am contented," answered Turnbull, " to abstain from all offences towards others, and shall even endeavour to keep myself from resenting those of others towards me, in the hope of bringing to pass such a quiet and godly state of things as your words, reverend father, induce me to expect." Turning his face to the wall, the Borderer lay in stern expectation of approaching death, which the bishop left him to contemplate.

The peaceful disposition which the prelate had inspired into Michael Turnbull, had in some degree diffused itself among those present, who heard with awe the spiritual admonition to suspend the national antipathy, and remain in truce and amity with each other. Heaven had, how-

ever, decreed that the national quarrel, in which so much blood had been sacrificed, should that day again be the occasion of deadly strife.

A loud flourish of trumpets, seeming to proceed from beneath the earth, now rung through the church, and roused the attention of the soldiers and worshippers then assembled. Most of those who heard these warlike sounds, betook themselves to their weapons, as if they considered it useless to wait any longer for the signal of conflict. Hoarse voices, rude exclamations, the rattle of swords against their sheathes, or their clashing against other pieces of armour, gave an awful presage of an onset, which, however, was for a time averted by the exhortations of the archbishop. A second flourish of trumpets having taken place, the voice of a herald made proclamation to the following purpose:—

“ That whereas there were many noble pursuivants of chivalry presently assembled in the Kirk of Douglas, and whereas there existed among them the usual causes of quarrel and points of debate for their advancement in chivalry, therefore the Scottish knights were ready

to fight any number of the English who might be agreed, either upon the superior beauty of their ladies, or upon the national quarrel in any of its branches, or upon whatsoever point might be at issue between them, which should be deemed satisfactory ground of quarrel by both; and the knights who should chance to be worsted in such dispute, should renounce the prosecution thereof, or the bearing arms therein thereafter, with such other conditions to ensue upon their defeat as might be agreed upon by a council of the knights present at the Kirk of Douglas aforesaid. But foremost of all, any number of Scottish knights, from one to twenty, will defend the quarrel which has already drawn blood, touching the freedom of Lady Augusta de Berkely, and the rendition of Douglas Castle to the owner here present. Wherefore it is required that the English knights do intimate their consent that such trial of valour take place, which, according to the rules of chivalry, they cannot refuse, without losing utterly the reputation of valour, and incurring the diminution of such other degree of estimation as a courageous pursuivant of arms

would willingly be held in, both by the good knights of his own country, and those of others."

This unexpected gage of battle realized the worst fears of those who had looked with suspicion on the extraordinary assemblage this day of the dependants of the House of Douglas. After a short pause, the trumpets again flourished lustily, when the reply of the English knights was made in the following terms:—

"That God forbid the rights and privileges of England's knights, and the beauty of her damsels, should not be asserted by her children, or, that such English knights as were here assembled, should show the least backwardness to accept the combat offered, whether grounded upon the superior beauty of their ladies, or whether upon the causes of dispute between the countries, for either or all of which the knights of England here present were willing to do battle in the terms of the indenture aforesaid, while sword and lance shall endure. Saving and excepting the surrender of the Castle of Douglas, which can be rendered to no one but England's king, or those acting under his orders."

CHAPTER XIII.

Cry the wild war-note, let the champions pass,
Do bravely each, and God defend the right ;
Upon Saint Andrew thrice can they thus cry,
And thrice they shout on height,
And then marked them on the Englishmen,
As I have told you right.
Saint George the bright, our ladies' knight,
To name they were full fain ;
Our Englishmen they cried on height,
And thrice they shout again.

Old Ballad.

THE extraordinary crisis mentioned in the preceding chapter, was the cause, as may be supposed, of the leaders on both sides now throwing aside all concealment, and displaying their utmost strength, by marshalling their respective adherents; the renowned Knight of Douglas, with Sir Malcolm Fleming and other distinguished cavaliers, were seen in close consultation.

Sir John de Walton, startled by the first flourish of trumpets, while anxiously endeavouring to secure a retreat for the Lady Augusta, was in a moment seen collecting his followers, in which he was assisted by the active friendship of the Knight of Valence.

The Lady of Berkely showed no craven spirit at these warlike preparations; she advanced, closely followed by the faithful Bertram, and a female in a riding-hood, whose face, though carefully concealed, was no other than that of the unfortunate Margaret de Hautlieu, whose worst fears had been realized as to the faithlessness of her betrothed knight.

A pause ensued, which for some time no one present thought himself of authority sufficient to break.

At last the Knight of Douglas stepped forward and said, loudly, "I wait to know whether Sir John de Walton requests leave of James of Douglas, to evacuate his castle without further wasting that daylight which might show us to judge a fair field, and whether he craves Douglas's leave and protection in doing so?"

The Knight of Walton drew his sword. "I hold the Castle of Douglas," he said, "in spite of all deadly,—and never will I ask the protection from any one which my own sword is competent to afford me!"

"I stand by you, Sir John," said Aymer de Valence, "as your true comrade, against whatever odds may oppose themselves to us."

"Courage, noble English," said the voice of Greenleaf; "take your weapons, in God's name. Bows and bills! bows and bills!—A messenger brings us notice that Pembroke is in full march hither from the borders of Ayrshire, and will be with us in half an hour. Fight on, gallant English! Valence to the rescue! and long life to the gallant Earl of Pembroke!"

Those English within and around the church no longer delayed to take arms, and De Walton, crying out at the height of his voice, "I implore the Douglas to look nearly to the safety of the ladies," fought his way to the church door; the Scottish finding themselves unable to resist the impression of terror which affected them at the sight of this renowned knight, seconded by his

brother-in-arms, both of whom had been so long the terror of the district. In the meantime, it is possible that De Walton might altogether have forced his way out of the church, had he not been met boldly by the young son of Thomas Dickson of Hazelside, while his father was receiving from Douglas the charge of preserving the stranger ladies from all harm from the fight, which, so long suspended, was now on the point of taking place.

De Walton, in the meantime, cast his eye upon the Lady Augusta, with a desire of rushing to the rescue ; but was forced to conclude, that he provided best for her safety by leaving her under the protection of Douglas's honour.

Young Dickson, in the meantime, heaped blow on blow, seconding with all his juvenile courage every effort he could make, in order to attain the prize due to the conqueror of the renowned De Walton.

“ Silly boy,” at length said Sir John, who had for some time forborne the stripling, “ take, then, thy death from a noble hand, since thou preferrest that to peace and length of days.”

“ I care not,” said the Scottish youth, with his dying breath ; “ I have lived long enough, since I have kept you so long in the place where you now stand.”

And the youth said truly, for as he fell never again to rise, the Douglas stood in his place, and without a word spoken, again engaged with De Walton in the same formidable single combat, by which they had already been distinguished, but with even additional fury. Aymer de Valence drew up to his friend De Walton's left hand, and seemed but to desire the apology of one of Douglas's people attempting to second him, to join in the fray ; but as he saw no person who seemed disposed to give him such opportunity, he repressed the inclination, and remained an unwilling spectator. At length it seemed as if Fleming, who stood foremost among the Scottish knights, was desirous to measure his sword with De Valence. Aymer himself, burning with the desire of combat, at last called out, “ Faithless Knight of Boghall ! step forth and defend yourself against the imputation of having deserted

your lady love, and of being a mansworn disgrace to the rolls of chivalry !”

“ My answer,” said Fleming, “ even to a less gross taunt, hangs by my side.” In an instant his sword was in his hand, and even the practised warriors who looked on felt difficulty in discovering the progress of the strife, which rather resembled a thunder-storm in a mountainous country, than the stroke and parry of two swords, offending on the one side, and keeping the defensive on the other.

Their blows were exchanged with surprising rapidity; and although the two combatants did not equal Douglas and De Walton in maintaining a certain degree of reserve, founded upon a respect which these knights mutually entertained for each other, yet the want of art was supplied by a degree of fury, which gave chance at least an equal share in the issue.

Seeing their superiors thus desperately engaged, the partisans, as they were accustomed, stood still on either side, and looked on with the reverence which they instinctively paid to their commanders and leaders in arms. One or two

of the women were in the meanwhile attracted, according to the nature of the sex, by compassion for those who had already experienced the casualties of war. Young Dickson, breathing his last among the feet of the combatants, was in some sort rescued from the tumult by the Lady de Berkely, in whom the action seemed less strange, owing to the pilgrim's dress which she still retained, and who in vain endeavoured to solicit the attention of the boy's father to the task in which she was engaged.

"Cumber yourself not, lady, about that which is bootless," said old Dickson, "and distract not your own attention and mine from preserving you, whom it is the Douglas's wish to rescue, and whom, so please God and Saint Bride, I consider as placed by my chieftain under my charge. Believe me, this youth's death is in no way forgotten, though this be not the time to remember it. A time will come for recollection, and an hour for revenge."

So said the stern old man, reverting his eyes from the bloody corpse which lay at his feet, a model of beauty and strength. Having taken

one more anxious look, he turned round, and placed himself where he could best protect the Lady of Berkely, not again turning his eyes on his son's body.

In the interim the combat continued, without the least cessation on either side, and without a decided advantage. At length, however, fate seemed disposed to interfere; the Knight of Fleming, pushing fiercely forward, and brought by chance almost close to the person of the Lady Margaret Hautlieu, missed his blow, and his foot sliding in the blood of the young victim, Dickson, he fell before his antagonist, and was in imminent danger of being at his mercy, when Margaret de Hautlieu, who inherited the soul of a warrior, and, besides, was a very strong, as well as an undaunted person, seeing a mace of no great weight lying on the floor, where it had been dropt by the fallen Dickson, it at the same instant caught her eye, armed her hand, and intercepted or struck down the sword of Sir Aymer de Valence, who would otherwise have remained the master of the day at that interesting moment. Fleming had more to do to avail himself of an

unexpected chance of recovery, than to make a commentary upon the manner in which it had been so singularly brought about; he instantly recovered the advantage he had lost, and was able in the ensuing close to trip up the feet of his antagonist, who fell on the pavement, while the voice of his conqueror, if he could properly be termed such, resounded through the church with the fatal words, "Yield thee, Aymer de Valence—rescue or no rescue—yield thee!—yield thee!" he added, as he placed his sword to the throat of the fallen knight, "not to me, but to this noble Lady—rescue or no rescue."

With a heavy heart the English knight perceived that he had fairly lost so favourable an opportunity of acquiring fame, and was obliged to submit to his destiny, or be slain upon the spot. There was only one consolation, that no battle was ever more honourably sustained, being gained as much by accident as by valour.

The fate of the protracted and desperate combat between Douglas and De Walton did not much longer remain in suspense; indeed, the number of conquests in single combat achieved by the

Douglas in these wars, was so great, as to make it doubtful whether he was not, in personal strength and skill, even a superior knight to Bruce himself, and he was at least acknowledged nearly his equal in the art of war.

So however it was, that when three quarters of an hour had passed in hard contest, Douglas and De Walton, whose nerves were not actually of iron, began to show some signs that their human bodies were feeling the effect of the dreadful exertion. Their blows began to be drawn more slowly, and were parried with less celerity. Douglas, seeing that the combat must soon come to an end, generously made a signal, intimating to his antagonist to hold his hand for an instant.

“ Brave De Walton,” he said, “ there is no mortal quarrel between us, and you must be sensible that in this passage of arms, Douglas, though he is only worth his sword and his cloak, has abstained from taking a decisive advantage when the chance of arms has more than once offered it. My father’s house, the broad domains around it, the dwelling, and the graves of

my ancestors, form a reasonable reward for a knight to fight for, and call upon me in an imperative voice to prosecute the strife which has such an object, while you are as welcome to the noble lady, in all honour and safety, as if you had received her from the hands of King Edward himself; and I give you my word, that the utmost honours which can attend a prisoner, and a careful absence of every thing like injury or insult, shall attend De Walton when he yields up the castle, as well as his sword, to James of Douglas."

"It is the fate to which I am perhaps doomed," replied Sir John de Walton; "but never will I voluntarily embrace it, and never shall it be said that my own tongue, saving in the last extremity, pronounced upon me the fatal sentence to sink the point of my own sword. Pembroke is upon the march with his whole army, to rescue the garrison of Douglas. I hear the tramp of his horse's feet even now; and I will maintain my ground while I am within reach of support; nor do I fear that the breath which now begins to fail will not last long enough to

uphold the struggle till the arrival of the expected succour. Come on, then, and treat me not as a child, but as one who, whether I stand or fall, fears not to encounter the utmost force of my knightly antagonist."

"So be it then," said Douglas, a darksome hue, like the lurid colour of the thunder-cloud, changing his brow as he spoke, intimating that he meditated a speedy end to the contest, when, just as the noise of horses' feet drew nigh, a Welsh knight, known as such by the diminutive size of his steed, his naked limbs, and his bloody spear, called out loudly to the combatants to hold their hands.

"Is Pembroke near?" said De Walton.

"No nearer than Loudon Hill," said the Prestantin; "but I bring his commands to John de Walton."

"I stand ready to obey them through every danger," answered the knight.

"Woe is me," said the Welshman, "that my mouth should bring to the ears of so brave a man tidings so unwelcome! The Earl of Pembroke yesterday received information that

the Castle of Douglas was attacked by the son of the deceased Earl, and the whole inhabitants of the district. Pembroke, on hearing this, resolved to march to your support, noble knight, with all the forces he had at his disposal. He did so, and accordingly entertained every assurance of relieving the castle, when unexpectedly he met, on Loudon Hill, a body of men of no very inferior force to his own, and having at their head that famous Bruce whom the Scottish rebels acknowledge as their king. He marched instantly to the attack, swearing he would not even draw a comb through his grey beard until he had rid England of this recurring plague. But the fate of war was against us."

He stopt here for lack of breath.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Douglas. "Robert Bruce will now sleep at night, since he has paid home Pembroke for the slaughter of his friends and the dispersion of his army at Methuen Wood. His men are, indeed, accustomed to meet with dangers, and to conquer them: those who follow him have been trained under Wallace, besides being partakers of the perils

of Bruce himself. It was thought that the waves had swallowed them when they shipped themselves from the west; but know, that the Bruce was determined with the present reviving spring to awaken his pretensions, and that he retires not from Scotland again while he lives, and while a single lord remains to set his foot by his sovereign, in spite of all the power which has been so feloniously employed against him."

"It is even too true," said the Welshman Meredith, "although it is said by a proud Scotchman.—The Earl of Pembroke, completely defeated, is unable to stir from Ayr, towards which he has retreated with great loss; and he sends his instructions to Sir John de Walton, to make the best terms he can for the surrender of the Castle of Douglas, and trust nothing to his support."

The Scottish, who heard this unexpected news, joined in a shout so loud and energetic, that the ruins of the ancient church seemed actually to rock, and threaten to fall on the heads of those who were crowded within it.

The brow of De Walton was overclouded at

the news of Pembroke's defeat, although in some respects it placed him at liberty to take measures or the safety of Lady Berkely. He could not, however, claim the same honourable terms which had been offered to him by Douglas before the news of the battle of Loudon Hill had arrived.

“ Noble knight,” he said, “ it is entirely at your pleasure to dictate the terms of surrender of your paternal castle ; nor have I a right to claim from you those conditions which, a little while since, your generosity put in my offer. But I submit to my fate ; and upon whatever terms you think fit to grant me, I must be content to offer to surrender to you the weapon, of which I now put the point in the earth, in evidence that I will never more direct it against you until a fair ransom shall place it once more at my own disposal.”

“ God forbid,” answered the noble James of Douglas, “ that I should take such advantage of the bravest knight out of not a few who have found me work in battle ! I will take example from the Knight of Fleming, who has gallantly bestowed his captive in guerdon upon a noble

damsel here present ; and in like manner I transfer my claim upon the person of the redoubted Knight of Walton, to the high and noble Lady Augusta Berkely, who, I hope, will not scorn to accept from the Douglas a gift which the chance of war has thrown into his hands."

Sir John de Walton, on hearing this unexpected decision, looked up like the traveller who discovers the beams of the sun breaking through and dispersing the tempest which has accompanied him for a whole morning. The Lady of Berkely recollected what became her rank, and showed her sense of the Douglas's chivalry. Hastily wiping off the tears which had unwillingly flowed to her eyes, while her lover's safety and her own were resting on the precarious issue of a desperate combat, she assumed the look proper to a heroine of that age, who did not feel averse to accept the importance which was conceded to her by the general voice of the chivalry of the period. Stepping forward, bearing her person gracefully, yet modestly, in the attitude of a lady accustomed to be looked to in difficulties like the present, she addressed the audi-

ence in a tone which might not have misbecome the Goddess of Battle dispersing her influence at the close of a field covered with the dead and the dying.

“The noble Douglas,” she said, “shall not pass without a prize from the field which he has so nobly won. This rich string of brilliants, which my ancestor won from the Sultan of Trebisond, itself a prize of battle, will be honoured by sustaining, under the Douglas’s armour, a lock of hair of the fortunate lady whom the victorious lord has adopted for his guide in chivalry; and if the Douglas, till he shall adorn it with that lock, will permit the honoured lock of hair which it now bears to retain its station, she on whose head it grew will hold it as a signal that poor Augusta de Berkely is pardoned for having gaged any mortal man in strife with the Knight of Douglas.”

“Woman’s love,” replied the Douglas, “shall not divorce this locket from my bosom, which I will keep till the last day of my life, as emblematic of female worth and female virtue. And, not to encroach upon the valued and honoured

province of Sir John de Walton, be it known to all men, that whoever shall say that Lady Augusta de Berkely has, in this entargled matter, acted otherwise than becomes the noblest of her sex, he will do well to be ready to maintain such a proposition with his lance, against James of Douglas, in a fair field."

This speech was heard with approbation on all sides ; and the news brought by Meredith of the defeat of the Earl of Pembroke, and his subsequent retreat, reconciled the fiercest of the English soldiers to the surrender of Douglas Castle. The necessary conditions were speedily agreed on, which put the Scottish in possession of this stronghold, together with the stores, both of arms and ammunition, of every kind, which it contained. The garrison had it to boast, that they obtained a free passage, with their horses and arms, to return by the shortest and safest route to the marches of England, without either suffering or inflicting damage.

Margaret of Hautlieu was not behind in acting a generous part ; the gallant Knight of Valence was allowed to accompany his friend De

Walton and the Lady Augusta to England, and without ransom.

The venerable prelate of Glasgow, seeing what appeared at one time likely to end in a general conflict, terminate so auspiciously for his country, contented himself with bestowing his blessing on the assembled multitude, and retiring with those who came to assist in the service of the day.

This surrender of Douglas Castle upon the Palm Sunday of 19th March, 1306-7, was the beginning of a career of conquest which was uninterrupted, in which the greater part of the strengths and fortresses of Scotland were yielded to those who asserted the liberty of their country, until the crowning mercy was gained in the celebrated field of Bannockburn, where the English sustained a defeat more disastrous than is mentioned upon any other occasion in their annals. Little need be said of the fate of the persons of this story. King Edward was greatly enraged at Sir John de Walton for having surrendered the Castle of Douglas, securing at the same time his own object, the envied

hand of the heiress of Berkely. The knights to whom he referred the matter as a subject of enquiry, gave it nevertheless as their opinion that De Walton was void of all censure, having discharged his duty in its fullest extent, till the commands of his superior officer obliged him to surrender the Dangerous Castle.

A singular renewal of intercourse took place, many months afterwards, between Margaret of Hautlieu and her lover, Sir Malcolm Fleming. The use which the lady made of her freedom, and of the doom of the Scottish Parliament, which put her in possession of her father's inheritance, was to follow her adventurous spirit through dangers not usually encountered by those of her sex; and the Lady of Hautlieu was not only a daring follower of the chase, but it was said that she was even not daunted in the battle-field. She remained faithful to the political principles which she had adopted at an early period; and it seemed as if she had formed the gallant resolution of shaking the god Cupid from her horse's mane, if not treading him beneath her horse's feet.

The Fleming, although he had vanished from the neighbourhood of the counties of Lanark and Ayr, made an attempt to state his apology to the Lady de Hautlieu herself, who returned his letter unopened, and remained to all appearance resolved never again to enter upon the topic of their original engagement. It chanced, however, at a later period of the war with England, while Fleming was one night travelling upon the Border, after the ordinary fashion of one who sought adventures, a waiting-maid, equipped in a fantastic habit, asked the protection of his arm in the name of her lady, who, late in the evening, had been made captive, she said, by certain ill-disposed caitiffs, who were carrying her by force through the forest. The Fleming's lance was, of course, in its rest, and woe betide the faitour whose lot it was to encounter its thrust; the first fell, incapable of farther combat, and another of the felons encountered the same fate with little more resistance. The lady, released from the discourteous cord which restrained her liberty, did not hesitate to join company with the brave knight by whom she had been rescued ;

and although the darkness did not permit her to recognise her old lover in her liberator, yet she could not but lend a willing ear to the conversation with which he entertained her, as they proceeded on the way. He spoke of the fallen caitiffs as being Englishmen, who found a pleasure in exercising oppression and barbarities upon the wandering damsels of Scotland, and whose cause, therefore, the champions of that country were bound to avenge while the blood throbbed in their veins. He spoke of the injustice of the national quarrel which had afforded a pretence for such deliberate oppression; and the lady, who herself had suffered so much by the interference of the English in the affairs of Scotland, readily acquiesced in the sentiments which he expressed on a subject which she had so much reason for regarding as an afflicting one. Her answer was given in the spirit of a person who would not hesitate, if the times should call for such an example, to defend even with her hand the rights which she asserted with her tongue.

Pleased with the sentiments which she expressed, and recognising in her voice that secret

charm, which, once impressed upon the human heart, is rarely wrought out of the remembrance by a long train of subsequent events, he almost persuaded himself that the tones were familiar to him, and had at one time formed the key to his innermost affections. In proceeding on their journey, the knight's troubled state of mind was augmented instead of being diminished. The scenes of his earliest youth were recalled by circumstances so slight, as would in ordinary cases have produced no effect whatsoever; the sentiments appeared similar to those which his life had been devoted to enforce, and he half persuaded himself that the dawn of day was to be to him the beginning of a fortune equally singular and extraordinary.

In the midst of this anxiety, Sir Malcolm Fleming had no anticipation that the lady whom he had heretofore rejected was again thrown into his path, after years of absence; still less, when daylight gave him a partial view of his fair companion's countenance, was he prepared to believe that he was once again to term himself the champion of Margaret de Hautlieu, but

it was so. The lady, on that direful morning when she retired from the church of Douglas, had not resolved (indeed what lady ever did?) to renounce, without some struggle, the beauties which she had once possessed. A long process of time, employed under skilful hands, had succeeded in obliterating the scars which remained as the marks of her fall. These were now considerably effaced, and the lost organ of sight no longer appeared so great a blemish, concealed, as it was, by a black ribbon, and the arts of the tirewoman, who made it her business to shadow it over by a lock of hair. In a word, he saw the same Margaret de Hautlieu, with no very different style of expression from that which her face, partaking of the high and passionate character of her soul, had always presented. It seemed to both, therefore, that their fate, by bringing them together after a separation which appeared so decisive, had intimated its *fiat* that their fortunes were inseparable from each other. By the time that the summer sun had climbed high in the heavens, the two travellers rode apart from their retinue, conversing together

with an eagerness which marked the important matters in discussion between them; and in a short time it was made generally known through Scotland, that Sir Malcolm Fleming and the Lady Margaret de Hautlieu were to be united at the court of the good King Robert, and the husband invested with the honours of Biggar and Cumbernauld, an earldom so long known in the family of Fleming.

THE gentle reader is acquainted, that these are, in all probability, the last tales which it will be the lot of the Author to submit to the public. He is now on the eve of visiting foreign parts; a ship of war is commissioned by its Royal Master to carry the Author of *Waverley* to climates in which he may possibly obtain such a restoration of health as may serve him to spin his thread to an end in his own country. Had he continued to prosecute his usual literary labours, it seems indeed probable, that at the term of years he

has already attained, the bowl, to use the pathetic language of Scripture, would have been broken at the fountain; and little can one, who has enjoyed on the whole an uncommon share of the most inestimable of worldly blessings, be entitled to complain, that life, advancing to its period, should be attended with its usual proportions of shadows and storms. They have affected him at least in no more painful manner than is inseparable from the discharge of this part of the debt of humanity. Of those whose relation to him in the ranks of life might have insured him their sympathy under indisposition, many are now no more; and those who may yet follow in his wake, are entitled to expect, in bearing inevitable evils, an example of firmness and patience, more especially on the part of one who has enjoyed no small good fortune during the course of his pilgrimage.

The public have claims on his gratitude, for which the Author of *Waverley* has no adequate means of expression; but he may be permitted to hope, that the powers of his mind, such as they are, may not have a different date from

those of his body; and that he may again meet his patronizing friends, if not exactly in his old fashion of literature, at least in some branch, which may not call forth the remark, that—

Superfluous lags the veteran on the stage.

ABBOTSFORD, *September*, 1831.

THE END.

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